

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL BLUFFS AS A STAGING  
AREA FOR WESTERN SETTLEMENT, 1838-1869

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by  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historical writings on the Westward movement have tended to center around two aspects: the adventures of the overland trail and the glamorous destinations such as Oregon and California. Although the West has been examined by historians such as Ray A. Billington and Frederick Turner, there remains a need to treat specifically the role of the "jumping-off" places in the Westward movement. In the process of focusing attention on their destinations, places such as Council Bluffs, Iowa, Independence, Missouri, and St. Joseph, Missouri, have been overlooked in historical writings.<sup>1</sup> To further complicate the problem, these towns have grown into modern cities, and in the process many of the historical sites have been destroyed.

This study proposes to look at this neglected aspect of the Westward movement by examining the role of one of these jumping-off places, Council Bluffs, in the trans-Missouri Westward movement. This study begins in 1838 when Father De Smet established a Jesuit mission in Council Bluffs and ends in 1869 when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads were joined, making transcontinental travel by wagons obsolete.

The terms: Jumping-off place, outfitting center, and staging area are used synonymously to designate those centers which outfitted and

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, "The Jumping-Off Places on the Overland Trail," The Frontier Re-examined, McDermott, John F., ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 27-28.

supplied Westward emigrants. These towns and villages served as rendezvous points for emigrants from eastern states and Europe. At the outfitting towns, emigrants normally would buy enough supplies to last them across the plains, buy outfits usually consisting of a pair of oxen and a wagon, find out information about crossing the plains, and organize into companies. The business of outfitting emigrants at these places was lucrative, producing much rivalry between outfitting centers.

A strategic location was a necessity. This was verified by an emigrant guidebook which concluded that the "natural location of a city must be depended upon in a great measure to insure its prosperity as a commercial center, and altogether for its desirableness as a home."<sup>1</sup>

Both attributes were true of Council Bluffs, located fifteen miles north of the junction of the Platte and Missouri Rivers on the Iowa side.

The broad bottom lands at this point averaged from three to seven miles in width. Council Bluffs was located at the edge of the bluffs at the narrowest point in the valley. These bluffs averaged from fifty to three hundred feet in height, ranging off into broken ridges, then into prairie lands.<sup>2</sup> An abundance of cottonwood grew on the Missouri bottom, and hardwood trees grew on nearby hillsides. Land around Council Bluffs was described as being very productive and "congenial to the growth of wheat, corn, rye, barley, oats, potatoes, and fruit."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Campbell's Western Guide (Chicago: John R. Walsh, 1866).

<sup>2</sup>D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the Early History of Pottawattamie County," Annals of Iowa, First Series, IX (October, 1871), 523-24.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph P. Bushnell, Directory of Council Bluffs, pp. 17-18.

Problem in the Historical Context: With the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, the United States gained the trans-Mississippi West--an area rich with minerals, lumber, and fertile soil. In their exploration of this area during the years 1803 to 1806, Lewis and Clark reported mountain streams teeming with beaver. Their discoveries encouraged trappers, trading companies, and mountain men to exploit the Rocky Mountain area. While trapping and trading, these men discovered South Pass, the Snake River Route to Oregon, as well as the overland route to the interior of the Rocky Mountains. But it was not until the 1840's that trappers and missionaries in Oregon stimulated a great migration through their journals and letters. They praised the rich soil, good climate, and ideal farming conditions. Improved river transportation, higher prices for farm produce and the discovery of gold in the Far West lured many eastern emigrants and Mississippi Valley residents.

A number of significant factors influenced the development of Council Bluffs as a major staging area: The efforts of Lewis and Clark, Major Long, and Father De Smet affected the subsequent settlement. Geographic factors contributed to its establishment as a community. The Mormons halted their migration and established business places which they later abandoned. Orson Hyde, leader and journalist of the Mormon community used various techniques to maintain law and order and promoted the economic development of Council Bluffs as a major staging area for Western settlement. However, in 1852 Mormons made a mass exodus to Salt Lake City. This affected the subsequent social structure of the frontier community at Council Bluffs. The heavy



yearly migration changed its economic and social structure. Residents, hoping to stimulate the economic development of Council Bluffs, claimed that it was the "Spearhead of the Frontier" and the "Star of the Northwest." Various techniques were used by promoters and land speculators to draw attention to their town. Rivalries and politics were involved in determining the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad at Council Bluffs in 1869. One prominent figure in this rivalry was General G. M. Dodge.

Procedure: This study is an overview of Council Bluff's role as a catalyst in the settlement of the trans-Missouri West. Primary sources were emphasized. Such sources included diaries and journals of D. C. Bloomer, an early lawyer and land agent residing in Council Bluffs; accounts of overland travellers; the autobiography of Grenville Dodge relative to the designation of Council Bluffs as the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad; and newspapers published in Council Bluffs from 1848-1869--The Frontier Guardian, Bugle, and Chronotype and The Nonpareil.

Secondary literature was used to substantiate the primary sources. For example, numerous articles relating to the history of Council Bluffs have been published in the Annals of Iowa and the Iowa Journal of History and Politics.

## CHAPTER 2

### "SENTERAL TO SEVERAL NATIONS"

The first organized attempt to develop Council Bluffs as a major staging area has been attributed to the Mormons who temporarily settled at Miller's Hollow (Council Bluffs) in 1846. However Council Bluffs had already established a reputation as a center of Indian trade and a "jumping-off place" for both fur trading and military expeditions prior to 1846. Drawing attention to its strategic location as being "senteral to Several nations,"<sup>1</sup> in 1804 Lewis and Clark promoted the idea of locating a trading post at Council Bluffs. In addition to its geographic importance, building supplies, such as timber and clay were abundant.<sup>2</sup> As a result of a council with the Otoe and Missouri Indians on a high bluff, the place was named Council Bluff.<sup>3</sup> The name Council Bluff was pluralized and subsequently used by trappers, traders, navigators, and government officials to designate the entire area of trading posts and trading activity between the Platte River and Fort Atkinson until 1850.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard De Voto (ed.), The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1953), pp. 16-17. See Appendix A for location.

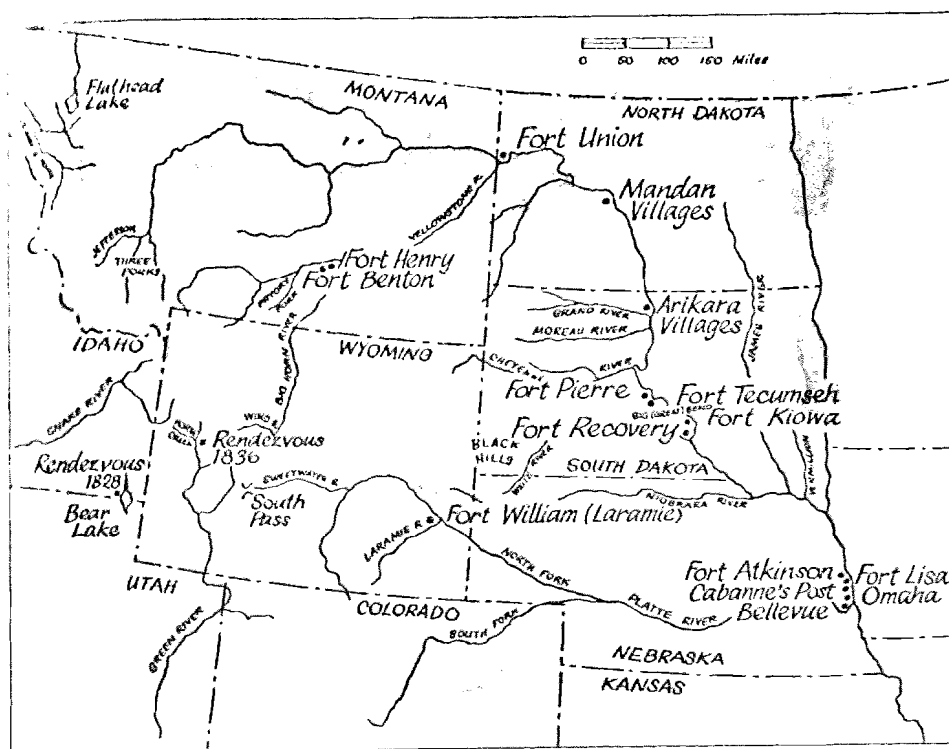
<sup>2</sup>Jay Monaghan, The Overland Trail (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1937), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>De Voto, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Charles H. Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs (Washington: Byron S. Adams, 1916), p. 9.

Lewis and Clark's successful expedition of 1804-1806 stimulated widespread interest in the potential fur trade of the West. Council Bluffs became an important fur trading center on the Missouri River. During a fifty-year span which began with Lewis and Clark's expedition, at least twenty successive trading posts were established at Council Bluffs, located about halfway between St. Louis and the fur fields.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Manuel Lisa, along with several other St. Louis investors, organized the Missouri Fur Company in 1808-9.<sup>2</sup>

Map 1 Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains, 1819-43



<sup>1</sup>Hiram M. Chittenden, The American Fur Trade of the Far West, II (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1902), 949-950.

<sup>2</sup>John E. Sunder, Joshua Pilcher: Fur Trader and Indian Agent (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 28.

Lisa was able to compete successfully with British traders from Canada for furs in the Upper Missouri region until the outbreak of the War of 1812. The disruption of the war forced Lisa to retreat to Council Bluffs where he had earlier established a trading post.<sup>1</sup> Following the settlement of the war, potential fur trading profits once again stimulated public interest in the West.

This resulted in military and scientific expeditions such as the abortive Yellowstone Expedition of 1819 to the mouth of the Yellowstone River. President Monroe and his Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, planned to exhibit a massive show of force for the expedition--a thousand men to protect the northern frontier, to promote the expansion of the fur trade, and to diminish British authority in the upper Missouri River area.<sup>2</sup> The military branch was headed by Colonel Henry Atkinson and the scientific expedition was directed by Major Stephen H. Long. Instead of using keelboats they experimented with the latest mode of river transportation--steamboats. Of the six steamboats only the Western Engineer, especially designed for scientific exploration, was able to reach Council Bluffs; three were forced to return to St. Louis, while two never made it to the Missouri.<sup>3</sup> The transportation problems were largely due to the use of poorly designed and constructed steamboats not suited for travel on the Missouri River.

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<sup>1</sup>David Meriwether, My Life in the Mountains and on the Plains, ed. Robert A. Griffen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Chittenden, op. cit., pp. 562-566. See Appendix B for map of proposed expedition.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 569-571.

Due to these extensive transportation problems, Atkinson's men were forced to make a winter camp near Council Bluffs and Long's men settled nearby at Engineer Cantonment where the party collected data on geology and natural history.<sup>1</sup> The winter proved to be disastrous to Atkinson's party as some three hundred men contracted scurvy and of those, one hundred died. The death toll, coupled with the transportation problems, produced a national scandal resulting in Congressional refusal to appropriate additional funds for the expedition.<sup>2</sup> However, Congress provided funds to construct a fort on the Missouri River and a 300-mile road between Council Bluffs and the Grand River in Missouri.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the unsuccessful expedition, Council Bluffs became linked to a more settled area, Missouri, via a military road. Council Bluffs then served as the base of operations for the Long expedition up the Platte in 1820. Three years later Council Bluffs again was used as a base of operations against the Arikara Indians. And in 1825, it also served as a base for the second Yellowstone expedition.<sup>4</sup>

Anticipating the results of the first Yellowstone Expedition, Manuel Lisa moved his family to Council Bluffs in 1819. He hoped to capitalize on the fur trading post's geographic importance in

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix C for map.

<sup>2</sup>Chittenden, op. cit., pp. 569, 574; Roger L. Nichols (ed.), The Missouri Expedition, 1818-1820 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. xi.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth A. Gallaher, "The Military-Indian Frontier, 1830-1835," Iowa Journal of History and Politics, XV (July, 1917), 423. Hereafter referred to as IJHP.

<sup>4</sup>Chittenden, op. cit., pp. 588 ff.

the Upper Missouri region.<sup>1</sup> When Lisa died in 1820, his partner Joshua Pilcher continued the operation of the Missouri Fur Company at Council Bluffs.

In 1822 the Missouri Fur Company sent nearly three hundred fur traders into the Upper Missouri Territory. In the following year the Missouri Fur Company's dominance of the Council Bluffs trade was challenged by the French Fur Company of Berthold, Chouteau, and Pratte.<sup>2</sup> By 1824 this competition widened when John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company arrived at Council Bluffs. Keen competition in the fur trading areas of the West finally forced Joshua Pilcher and partners out of business in 1826.<sup>3</sup> Realizing that the American Fur Company's success depended on reliable transportation between St. Louis and the Upper Missouri, John Jacob Astor collaborated with Pierre Chouteau to develop new modes of travel suitable for the fur trade. They discovered that

Steam unsealed the upper river: unsealed its isolation, kept the seal broken, and strengthened, through improved communications, the Company's hand in the upper valley.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1830's, activities in the region shifted from the west side of the Missouri River to its present site on the east when the Pottawattamie Indians settled there. In a series of

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<sup>1</sup>David Lavender, Westward Vision: The Story of the Oregon Trail (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 172-73.

<sup>2</sup>Sunder, op. cit., pp. 37, 58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>John E. Sunder, The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 19.

treaties negotiated between 1829 and 1837, the Pottawattamies exchanged their lands in the Great Lakes region for five million acres in southwest Iowa. The same area had been ceded to the United States in 1829 by the Sioux, Sacs, Foxes, Ioways, Otoes, and Missouries.<sup>1</sup> Through errors on the part of government agents, the Pottawattamie Indians moved westward in 1835, 1836, and the early part of 1837 to the northwestern part of Missouri, opposite Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.<sup>2</sup> In 1837 these Indians left for their original lands in southwest Iowa. This was effected under the jurisdiction of the Council Bluffs sub-agency, located near the Platte River at the present site of Council Bluffs.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Edwin James, sub-agent for the Pottawattamie Indians, was assisted by the sub-agency farmer, Davis Harden, who arrived with his family from Fort Leavenworth in 1837.

Later that same year on August 4, Captain D. B. Moore, commander of Company C of the First Regiment of Cragoons marched with his company of sixty-six from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to the Council Bluffs sub-agency. His forces were intended to provide protection for the remainder of the emigrating Pottawattamies against the militant Sioux to the North.<sup>4</sup> To protect the Pottawattamies, Captain Moore constructed a twenty-five-foot-square blockhouse in the vicinity of Council Bluffs. This blockhouse became the first

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<sup>1</sup>Frank A. Mullin, "Father De Smet and the Pottawattamie Indian Mission," IJHP, XXIII (April, 1925), p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Babbitt, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

landmark in Council Bluffs and formed the nucleus of the new Indian settlement. Billy Caldwell, one of the prominent Pottawattamie chiefs, located his village near this blockhouse.

At this time, a band of Pottawattamies appealed to the Jesuit missionaries among the Kickapoo Indians in northern Kansas for a "black robe," one of several Indian requests for Jesuit missionaries. As early as 1831, a delegation from the remote Northwest area Indians had accompanied an eastbound fur expedition to St. Louis via Council Bluffs to appeal for "black robes." Similar appeals were made in 1835-7, but were temporarily rejected because the church has no available missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

By 1837 the request of the Pottawattamie Indians as well as the reputation of the Council Bluffs area attracted the attention of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet. Father De Smet, a native of Belgium, had been alerted to the spiritual needs of the American Indians through a fellow churchman. When he reached St. Louis, he studied every available history of the West, accounts of the Missouri Valley, and books about Indian customs. In addition, he frequently talked with fur traders and mountain men about their experiences in the West.

In response to the appeal by the Pottawattamies, Father De Smet and his associate, Father Verreydt, along with Brother Andrew Mazelli, landed at the site of the present city of Council Bluffs on May 31, 1838. The Pottawattamies turned out in gala attire for the arrival of the

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<sup>1</sup>Hiram M. Chittenden and Alfred T. Richardson, Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S. J., 1801-1873 (New York: Harper, 1905), I, pp. 19-20.



"black robes." However, much to the surprise of the missionaries, the Indians were not as enthusiastic as Father De Smet had anticipated. Only two of some two thousand Indians and some French half-breeds came forward to shake hands. The Irish halfbreed chief, Billy Caldwell, gave them possession of three cabins fourteen-foot-square with "roofs of wooden rafters which let in the rain, hail, and snow."<sup>1</sup> They later added a fourth cabin. In addition, the government donated the block-house which was converted into a chapel. Nearby they laid out a cemetery. Shortly after their arrival, the missionaries organized a day school for the Indians that attracted thirty children. The mission was named St. Joseph's Mission but was also referred to as St. Mary's.<sup>2</sup>

By August 15, 1838, considerable progress had been made according to Father De Smet's letters.

The church where the divine service was celebrated was perhaps the poorest in the world; but twelve young neophytes, who three months before had no idea of the law of God, sang mass in a manner truly edifying. Reverend F. Verrydt preached on devotion to the Mother of God; afterwards I gave an instruction upon the ceremonies and upon the necessity of baptism, and conferred that sacrament upon a score of adults. . . . After the mass I blessed four marriages.<sup>3</sup>

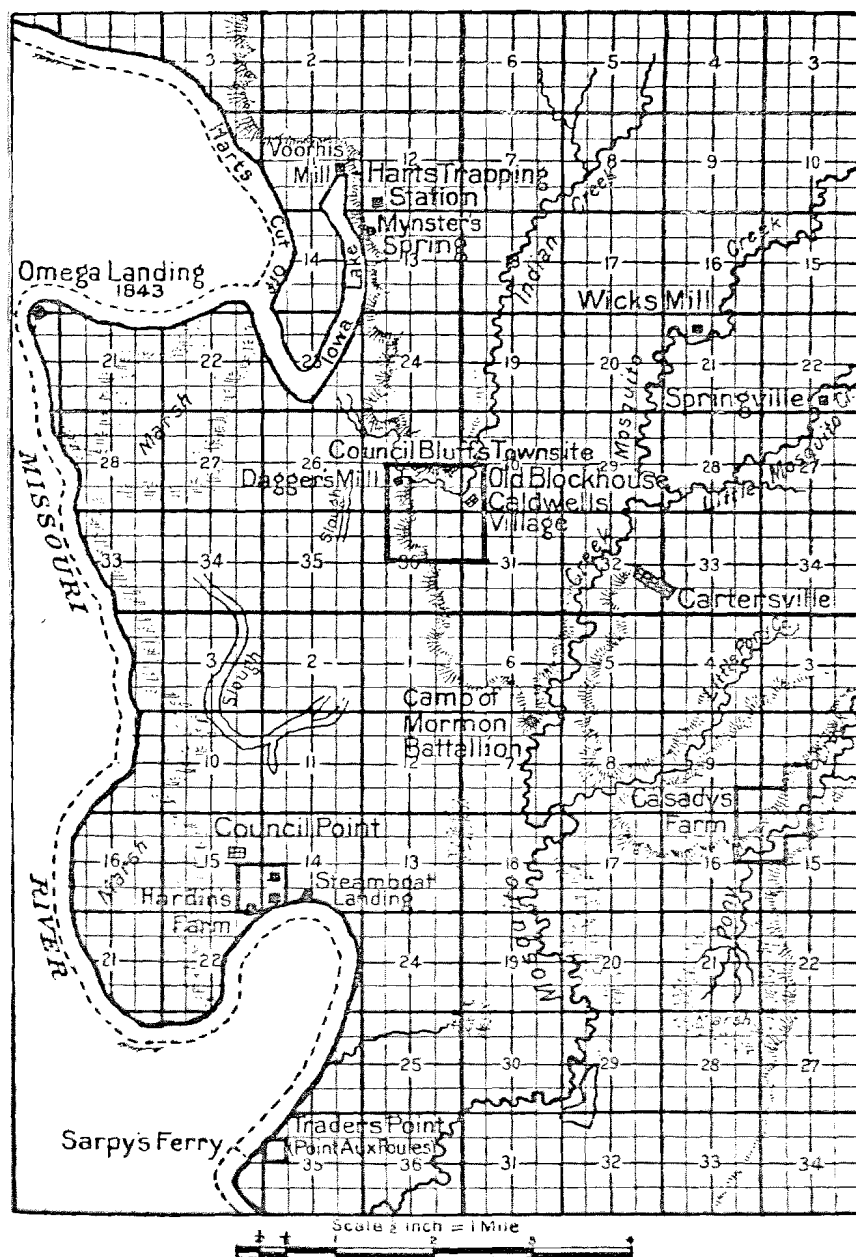
Father De Smet admired the gentility and obedience of the Pottawattamies but disliked their idleness, their wandering disposition, and their practice of polygamy. Concerning polygamy, Father De Smet commented: "The change wives as often as the gentlemen of St. Louis change their coats."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 158. <sup>2</sup>Mullen, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>Chittenden and Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup>Chittenden and Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 157, 163.



Map 2. Map of the Vicinity of Council Bluffs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Babbitt, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

He observed very few quarrels among the Indians except when they were drunk. The liquor traffic became one of the greatest obstacles facing the missionaries. This problem was vividly recorded in Father De Smet's diary in 1839:

May 25. Two Potawatomies killed on the Chage river in a drunken frolic.

May 27. Three Potawatomies drowned in the Missouri, supposed to be drunk.

May 28. A Potawatomie poisoned on the Mosquito while drunk. Frequently the case.

May 30. Arrival of Steamer Wilmington with provisions. A war of extermination appears preparing around the poor Potawatomies. Fifty large cannons have been landed, ready charged with the most murderous grape shot, each containing thirty gallons of whiskey, brandy, rum, or alcohol. The boat was not yet out of sight when the skirmishes commenced. After the fourth, fifth and sixth discharges, the confusion became great and appalling. In all directions, men, women and children were seen tottering and falling; the war-whoop, the merry Indian's song, cries, savage roarings, formed a chorus. Quarrel succeeded quarrel. Blows followed blows. The club, tomahawk, spears, butcher knives, brandished together in the air . . .

I shuddered at the deed. A squaw offered her little boy, four years old, to the crew of the boat for a few bottles of whiskey. . . .

No agent here seems to have the power to put the laws into execution.

May 31. Drinking all day. Drunkards by the dozen. Indians are selling horses, blankets, guns, their all, to have a lick at the cannon. Four dollars a bottle!

June 19. A monster in human shape . . . a savage returning home from a night's debauch, wrested his infant son from the breast of his mother and crushed him against the post of his lodge. . . .

Aug. 19. Annuities \$90,000. Divided to the Indians. Great gala. Wonderful scrapings of traders to obtain their Indian credits.

Aug. 20. Since the day of payment, drunkards are seen and heard in all places. Liquor is rolled out to the Indians by whole barrels; sold even by the white men in the presence of the agent. Wagon loads of the abominable stuff arrive daily from the settlements, and along with it the very dregs of our white neighbors and voyagers of the mountains, drunkards, gamblers, etc.<sup>1</sup>

When Father De Smet witnessed the horrors of drunkenness and its destructive power in the lives of Indians, he began a campaign against the liquor traffic. He singled out the apathetic federal officials, the Indian agents who failed to enforce the liquor laws, and greedy white men who tempted the Indians. Besides the revolting uncleanness, idleness, and love of whiskey, he was discouraged by the Indians' inability to grasp abstract religious ideas. Father De Smet concluded that the conversion of Indians was a work of God.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the disappointments of their ministry, the missionaries encountered problems of isolation and loneliness. "This portion of the divine Master's vineyard, requires from those who tend it, a life of crosses, privations and patience," wrote Father De Smet.<sup>3</sup> At various times they found it difficult to obtain supplies and once they had to live on acorns and wild roots for more than a month.<sup>4</sup> Special events, such as the arrival of steamboats,<sup>5</sup> delegations of Indians from neighboring tribes, or visits from government officials, enlivened their existence.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 172-174.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18; III, 1076.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 163, 183.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Mullin, op. cit., p. 208.

Other events included conversations with explorers and scientists, such as Jean Nicolet, Charles Geyer and John C. Fremont. These meetings proved to be valuable to everyone because Father De Smet kept accurate records of geological specimens, plant life, and events at St. Joseph's Mission. In this way he provided valuable assistance to members of expeditions.<sup>1</sup> Father De Smet, on the other hand, became more knowledgeable about the areas west and north of Council Bluffs.

Another aspect of Father De Smet's work was his role as peacemaker. The Pottawattamies lived in constant fear of attack from their traditional enemies, the Sioux. After the Sioux had murdered several Pottawattamies in the spring of 1839, Father De Smet began the first of many missions to the Sioux. He hoped to establish a lasting peace between the Sioux and the Pottawattamies.<sup>2</sup> By 1839 Father De Smet's reputation as an emissary of peace had spread throughout the whole Northwest. Inspired by Father De Smet's reputation, two Iroquois Indians from the Flathead and Nez Percé Indians travelled to St. Joseph's Mission to request missionary help. "With tears in their eyes they begged me to return with them. . . . Should God deem me worthy of the honor I would willingly give my life to help these Indians," Father De Smet recalled.<sup>3</sup>

On a trip to St. Louis in 1840 to obtain supplies for the mission, Father De Smet was informed by church officials that he was to take

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<sup>1</sup>Chittenden and Richardson, op. cit., pp. 179-182.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-190. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

a new mission to the far west among the Flatheads. Father Hoecken, a fellow Jesuit, was selected as his successor.<sup>1</sup>

Returning late in 1840 from his new mission in the far west, Father De Smet stopped at St. Joseph's Mission where he described its decaying condition:

I had . . . the grief of observing the ravages which unprincipled men, liquor-sellers, had caused in this budding mission; drunkenness, with the invasion of the Sioux on the other hand, had finally dispersed my poor savages.<sup>2</sup>

By September 1841, the remaining missionaries left St. Joseph's Mission to work among the Pottawattamies in Kansas. One of the main reasons for closing the mission was the damage caused by the liquor traffic. Several individuals, including Father De Smet, noted that the Council Bluffs sub-agency located on an east-west trade route was the worst possible location for Indians since every steamer travelling on the Missouri River carried liquor.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the missionaries did not receive any cooperation from government officials and Indian agents in the area. The high turnover rate of sub-agents at the Council Bluffs agency contributed to the condition. For instance, during the duration of St. Joseph's Mission, the longest period of employment by any one sub-agent was eighteen months.

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<sup>1</sup> John U. Terrell, Black Robe: The Life of Pierre-Jean De Smet, Missionary, Explorer & Pioneer (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1964), pp. 76 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Chittenden and Richardson, op. cit., pp. 256-258.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth A. Gallaher, "Indian Agents in Iowa," IJHP, XIV (October, 1916), 576-7.

Father De Smet's efforts to establish a lasting peace between the Sioux and Pottawattamies were threatened in April, 1842. Again the government was asked to provide protection for the Pottawattamie Indians. A company of troops commanded by Captain John H. K. Burgwin arrived by steamer from Fort Leavenworth, constructed a temporary post called "Camp Fenwick" later changed to Fort Croghan, and aborted a Sioux attack by their presence. They also helped to suppress illicit liquor traffic in the Council Bluffs area.<sup>1</sup> However, as long as Council Bluffs remained a center of trade, the liquor traffic continued.

Lewis and Clark's observation of Council Bluffs as the crossroads of Indian trade motivated fur traders and fur companies to establish trading posts. To make trade more profitable in the 1830's, new methods of transportation had to be developed. Until the steamboat unsealed the Missouri River, Council Bluffs was the last fortified outpost before heading into the desolation and wilderness of the West. The gentle Pottawattamies, in contrast to their neighboring Sioux, created a peaceful atmosphere. These characteristics explain why the government used Council Bluffs as a base of operations for military and scientific expeditions. Consequently the name "Council Bluffs" appeared frequently in government reports.

Steamships linked Council Bluffs to the merchants and the culture of St. Louis but also destroyed Indian communities with the liquor traffic. By not enforcing treaty stipulations, especially

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob Van der Zee, "Forts in the Iowa Country," IJHP (April, 1914), 189.

those dealing with liquor trade and Indian rights, the government encouraged the economic prosperity of the white traders but also invited an open confrontation with the Indians.

Perhaps more than any other man, Father De Smet focused attention on the Council Bluffs area through his voluminous correspondence. His meticulous accounts vividly described the trade activity and the effects of the liquor traffic. Although St. Joseph's Mission proved to be short-lived, it did serve as a period of training for Father De Smet who later was acknowledged and trusted as an emissary of peace by numerous Indian tribes. As an effective liaison between the Indians and the whites, Father De Smet helped prepare the way for the mass migrations to the Far West. The first of these migrating groups, the Mormons, arrived at Council Bluffs in 1846.



## CHAPTER 3

### "THE MECCA ON THE MISSOURI," 1846-1848

In 1846, an entourage of sixteen hundred Mormon pioneers arrived in the Council Bluffs area to form a temporary settlement. This included some 3,000 wagons and 30,000 head of cattle, horses, mules, and sheep.<sup>1</sup>

The advent of this Mormon sect, also called Latter Day Saints, occurred during a period of unrest, social experimentation, and development of new religions in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Characterized as a socio-religious organization, the Mormons experimented with a form of communal life. Their form of communal living emphasized community welfare above individual welfare. The organization of the church imitated the patriarchal system of the Old Testament. Church leaders, such as Brigham Young and Orson Hyde, were regarded as modern counterparts to the Old Testament patriarchs.

Three times they had tried to establish themselves in other communities. Yet, in 1846 they were again forced to look for a "City of Zion," where they could practice their religious beliefs free from persecution. Sixteen hundred men, women, and children from Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, crossed the Mississippi

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, November 15, 1846, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Negus, "The Early History of Iowa. The Mormons-- The First Settlement of the Western Slope of Iowa," Annals of Iowa, First Series, IX (July, 1871), p. 568.

River to escape the intolerance of their neighbors. The Saints set out across Iowa, to some unknown haven, perhaps outside the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The 1846 group aimed to prepare for hundreds of followers, by looking for a place to plant summer crops, "at some point between this and the Pacific, where the biggest crowd of good people will be the old settlers."<sup>2</sup> Their journey to Council Bluffs was preceded by men who were sent out to buy stock, seeds, and provisions. Since there was no grass in the early months of their journey across Iowa, they bought inexpensive feed for their stock from money earned by Mormons who worked along the way.

By June 14, 1846, the advance guard of the Mormons selected the present site of Council Bluffs on the Missouri.<sup>3</sup> The following month, the main body joined them. Rather than continue to some point further west, Brigham Young, President of the Mormon Church, chose to remain on the Iowa frontier temporarily.<sup>4</sup> The lateness of the season, the poverty of the people, as well as other reasons prompted the decision to stay for the winter:

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, February 1, 1846, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Times and Seasons, February, 1846, p. 1114.

<sup>3</sup>Senate Documents, 29 Congress, 2nd Session, I, 287.

<sup>4</sup>Earl E. Olson, "The Mormons in Council Bluffs and Winter Quarters, Pioneers from 1846 to 1868," Speech to the Pottawattamie Historical Society, March 1, 1965, at Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Brigham Young, who had kept firm control over the group, and other Mormon leaders recognized that in its present condition the Mormon party would require years to reach the Rocky Mountains . . . reorganization was necessary, and anything less than the establishment of tight organization would invite disaster.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the government's call for 500 soldiers to serve in the Mexican War left many Mormon women and children dependent on other families.

By early autumn 12,000 Mormons were assembled beside the Missouri River, forming large camps on both sides. Although the greater part had located on the Iowa side on Pottawattamie Indian lands,<sup>2</sup> Brigham Young led a group across the Missouri River to a place called Winter Quarters, now known as Florence, Nebraska. The group, numbering over four thousand Saints, constructed cabins and dugouts at Winter Quarters.<sup>3</sup> No statement can be found explaining Young's move across the river. However, since they were looking for a place in which the Mormons would be the "largest crowd and the old settlers,"<sup>4</sup> the sparsely populated Nebraska territory perhaps suited their purposes better than Iowa's more populated

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas F. O'Dea, The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Hubert Howe Bancroft, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol. XXVI, The History of Utah (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1889), 223.

<sup>3</sup>Pottawattamie lands refer to the area of Southwest Iowa occupied by the Indians of that name. In June, 1846, the Pottawattamies made a new treaty with the United States by which they agreed to move to Kansas. By the end of the following year most of them had left Iowa except for a few who remained to hunt. Ruth A. Gallaher, "Indian Agents in Iowa," IJHP, XIV, (October, 1916).

<sup>5</sup>Times and Season, loc. cit.

territory. However, the settlement at Winter Quarters was short-lived because the Mormons and Indians quarreled over game, timber, and grass. Consequently, these Mormons evacuated Winter Quarters, relocating on Pottawattamie lands east of the Missouri River.<sup>1</sup>

The Iowa location was strategic: first, it was considered close to their destination; second, it was a frontier free from intolerant neighbors; and finally, it was located near western Missouri where supplies were available. The Iowa side was especially suited for winter quarters. The bluffs or hills provided protection, there was timber for building purposes, and an endless supply of hay and range for their stock.

The main settlement was situated on a stream called Indian Creek. This location, first named Miller's Hollow, was named for a prominent man among them who opened a store. Later it was renamed Kanesville in honor of Thomas L. Kane, a government official who befriended the Mormons.<sup>2</sup> The early settlement was described by a resident as a regular city of tents. The wagons were drawn up in two lines to form squares, with the tents pitched between the lines of wagons.<sup>3</sup> Soon a city of log buildings and dugouts, "numbering in the thousands," replaced the city of tents.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. R. Perkins, Mormon Battalion for Service Against Mexico Was Recruited Here (n.p., 1932), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Bancroft, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>3</sup>Charles H. Babbitt, Early Days at Council Bluffs (Washington: Byron S. Adams, 1916), pp. 79-80.

<sup>4</sup>D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the Early History of Pottawattamie County," Annals of Iowa, 1st Series, IX (April, 1871), 528.

The relationship between the Mormons and the Indians generally was harmonious. The Pottawattamies welcomed them, encouraging them to till the soil and cut and use the timber.<sup>1</sup> The hospitality of the Pottawattamies may be attributed to their fear of the powerful Sioux. By enlisting the good will of the Mormons, the Pottawattamies hoped to secure Mormon aid against the Sioux.<sup>2</sup> The Indian agent in the area obtained government sanction allowing the Mormons to settle and make improvements on Indian land. At the time of public land sales, the Mormons would pay the government price at one dollar and a quarter per acre. This offer allowed the Mormons the opportunity of selecting the best land along the Missouri River.<sup>3</sup>

In return for this generosity, extreme care was taken not to infringe on the rights of the Indians. Orson Hyde, assigned to preside over the Mormons at the Missouri River,<sup>4</sup> advised that they be prudent and saving in their use of timber. When cutting a tree, they were not to waste any part.<sup>5</sup>

At times, however, the Mormons considered the Indians to be a nuisance. These incidents were recorded in the Frontier Guardian, which began publication on February 7, 1849.<sup>6</sup> Reports of depredations

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, November 15, 1846, p. 116. <sup>2</sup>Babbitt, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>This land had been negotiated for by the United States, but would not be transferred to the Government for two years. The Millennial Star, November 15, 1846, pp. 117-118.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., August 15, 1847, p. 243. <sup>5</sup>The Frontier Guardian, August 22, 1849.

<sup>6</sup>In the early months of publication, Hyde added to the ways subscribers could pay for his paper. Commodities included farm products, lumber, oak and walnut wood, gold or silver coin or dust. Ibid., May 2, 1849.

committed by the Omahas from the west side of the Missouri River appeared occasionally. Kanessville residents were warned against trading with them. Horses and mules were stolen. These animals, argued the Omahas, served as indemnity for the privileges the Mormons had had while living at Winter Quarters.<sup>1</sup> To this accusation Orson Hyde replied that the "scores of cattle" killed by the Indians, during Mormon residency at Winter Quarters, was sufficient indemnity. Furthermore, he urged that the Omahas be taught to stay "on their own side."<sup>2</sup> However, the Indians posed no physical danger to the Mormons, who farmed the fertile soil around Kanessville.

In spite of Kanessville's strategic location, fertile soil, and other resources, living conditions were difficult at this frontier outpost. On a visit to St. Louis in 1847, Hyde confirmed this, "I have come down into the land of civilization."<sup>3</sup> Their homes lacked many conveniences and custom-made furnishings. However, the life within the home was more important to Mormons than the physical aspects. A description of supplies available to Kanessville residents, in the Frontier Guardian, indicated that the Mormons had the basic necessities, but few luxuries. Among items advertised were tallow, beeswax, and candles,<sup>4</sup> no lamps; flour and saleratus, but no yeast, baking powder, or bakery bread;<sup>5</sup> merinos, cashmeres, alpacas, flannels, drills, cottons,<sup>6</sup> but no ready-made clothing; and madder, alum, logwood,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., January 23, 1850.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 6, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>The Millennial Star, September 15, 1847, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup>Frontier Guardian, March 21, 1849.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., November 27, 1850.

cooperas, which suggested the dyeing of homespun rather than the buying of fabrics.<sup>1</sup>

Although there were skilled craftsmen in the Kanesville community, most of them necessarily were engaged in farming. Nevertheless some wood craftsmen made logs, shingles, post pins, and palings for community use and carpenters built cabins. There were wagon makers, shoemakers, blacksmiths and gunsmiths. Thomas Kane noted that many of the Mormons at Kanesville were skillful "at forge, loom, and turning lathe." He suggested that one of the most ingenious firearms he had every seen was made by one of these Mormons in a frontier camp. He also saw a cobbler hunt along the river for a lap-stone on which he finished the sole of a boot before the camp fire.<sup>2</sup>

The newspaper provided a picture of the economic condition of Kanesville. Prices on flour, beef, pork, bacon and hides; grains, corn, flax, seed, and potatoes; butter, cheese, eggs, honey, and beeswax,<sup>3</sup> were items advertised by "Smith and Tootle." They also advertised coffee, tea, sugar, molasses, indigo, madder, alum, logwood sulphur, brimstone, chalk, paints, oils, turpentine, medicines, spices and a few other things. The terms of payment can be interpreted as signs of the time: "N.B.=cash, gold dust, dry hides, beeswax, furs and peltries, taken in exchange of goods."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 21, 1849.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas L. Kane, The Mormons (Philadelphia: King & Baird, Printers, 1850), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-18.

<sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, March 21, 1849.

The "Voorhis" firm advertised gun powder, lead and caps, dyeing materials, dried apples and peaches, candles-sperm, adamantine, and tallow; wines and liquors."<sup>1</sup> Revolving rifles, pistols, and slide guns were advertised by the gunsmith Jonathan Browning, who encouraged emigrants and residents to examine his Browning guns.<sup>2</sup> Mr. A. Chadwick, a tailor from St. Louis, advertised his tailoring business at Kanesville promising to give satisfaction "in taste, elegance and good fit."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Crombie "formerly of Boston," and Mrs. Bond, "late from England" advertised their services to clean and press hats and dressmaking respectively.<sup>4</sup>

From these examples of advertisements, the industries of the Mormons can be determined: making of firearms, trading in furs and hides, agriculture, merchandizing, and blacksmithing.

To enliven the frontier existence the Mormons participated in various recreational forms.<sup>5</sup> Dancing, a favorite pastime, was regulated by the High Council of the church. At a meeting in October, 1849, the Council discussed the evils arising from "Stolen Parties," or parties not under the jurisdiction of the church. Anyone attending

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., January 22, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1849. Jonathan Browning's guns may have been the forerunner of the famous Browning guns. John Moses Browning (1855-1926) has been credited with the invention of the Browning guns. He was born in Ogden, Utah, of Mormon parents, son of Jonathan Browning, a gunsmith. Allen Johnsen, ed. Dictionary of American Biography, (New York: Scribner's, 1929), III, 174.

<sup>3</sup>The Frontier Guardian, February 7, 1849. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1849.

<sup>5</sup>In 1848, the Mormons constructed a log tabernacle which could accommodate one thousand persons. See Appendix D.



"such parties, planned in opposition to the church," was to be "disfellowshipped."<sup>1</sup> Other regulations set up by the High Council governing the Christmas frolic included:

First--no person that has been disfellowshipped or excommunicated from the church will be allowed to join the dance that is conducted by the sanction and authority of the church.

The four dancing parties during the winter of 1850, planned by the church leaders, were not sufficient for the people. The Council was continually petitioned for another, and yet another party. In addition, hunting, horse-racing and horseback riding were enjoyed by the Mormons.

Life at Kanesville also included hardships, sorrow, and misery. Thomas L. Kane recalled the conditions of "Misery Bottom," the Mormons' name for the Missouri River Valley at Kanesville. Kane said that the climate in this bottom was "pestiferous." Furthermore, the springs, creeks, and streams had dried down until they steamed "thick vapors redolent of the savor of death."<sup>3</sup> Conditions became worse when the cholera epidemic of 1849 struck. At times the Mormons "wanted for voices to raise the psalms on Sundays," and at one time "digging got behind hand" and burials were slow.<sup>4</sup>

Before the epidemic, George A. Smith had written to the Saints in England that it had been very "healthy throughout Pottawattamie county; scarcely anyone has had ague or fever."<sup>5</sup> This report was

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 31, 1849. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 28, 1849.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, op. cit., p. 1. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>The Millennial Star, January 1, 1849, p. 13.

confirmed by Orson Hyde who wrote that, "Peace, health, prosperity and plenty are with us at the Bluffs."<sup>1</sup> However, in 1849 the cholera reached Kanesville when the steamer Iowa brough 450 passengers, mostly English and Mormons. Three deaths occurred on board the night of its arrival despite the captain's report that cholera was on the decline.<sup>2</sup> The next report of deaths came in May 16, 1849, when three persons had died from cholera at Council Point, five miles from Kanesville. Orson Hyde immediately warned the people at Kanesville to keep free from fear, to be calm, and to guard against exposure.<sup>3</sup> On the heels of an optimistic report that only six deaths from cholera had been reported in Pottawattamie County, came the news that thirty-seven deaths had occurred in one day at Kanesville. Twenty-four of these died from cholera; no cause was attributed to the others.<sup>4</sup>

Orson Hyde was instrumental in helping the Kanesville community overcome this tragedy. He stated that there had been deaths from cholera at Kanesville, but not enough to cause the alarm which had existed. Some had died more from fright than from actual cholera. He frowned on the practice of the female portion "of the community of going from one house to another mourning." That, he suggested, preyed on the mind. "If you feel like mourning, wait until the season is more healthy," Hyde advised. As a remedy for the scourge, he suggested that the Mormons keep up their spirits, and be cheerful to all. A postscript was added, "Since writing the above, there have been four more deaths occurred by cholera."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1849, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>The Frontier Guardian, May 2, 1849. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 16, 1849.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1849. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., August 21, 1840.

Although the Mormons were preoccupied with making a living and burying the dead, there was time to set up schools at Kanesville. George Green opened a school as early as 1849.<sup>1</sup> Church authorities supported schools, suggesting that a school be established at every branch of the church.<sup>2</sup> Schools were not church-supported but carried on as individual enterprises by the teacher. Subjects taught included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, Latin and French. School supplies included McGuffey's first, second, third, fourth, and fifth Eclectic Readers, slates, lead pencils, wafers, and sealing wax, copy books, and almanacs.<sup>3</sup> This school supply business was handled by Orson Hyde, who advised emigrating families to take school books with them, since it would be difficult to obtain books in the West.<sup>4</sup>

During the first years of their residence in Western Iowa, the Mormons were relatively isolated. Mail and papers came by special messenger via a post office in Missouri, about one hundred miles away.<sup>5</sup> In 1848, Evan M. Greene became postmaster of their new post office at Kanesville.<sup>6</sup> Regular mail service between Kanesville and Utah was awarded to A. W. Babbitt who would carry the mail six times a year.

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., X (July, 1871), p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>By 1850 the Mormons had "branches" located at Crescent, Lewin's Grove, and Macedonia.

<sup>3</sup>The Frontier Guardian, November 28, 1849.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., February 20, 1850. <sup>5</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 528.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 530.

Mr. Babbitt usually left with six men, eighteen mules, and several horses<sup>1</sup> for his regular run to Salt Lake City. When the mail service between Kanesville and St. Joseph, Missouri, became too heavy to be carried on horseback, this run was replaced by a weekly four-horse conveyance.<sup>2</sup>

There was much disparity between postal rates to such places as California and England. For instance, letters weighing one-half ounce or less to England cost 24 cents, while similar letters to California cost 40 cents. This discrepancy was defended by editor Hyde, who pointed to the more than \$300 expenses incurred in sending mail across the plains. One man could not cross the plains alone; he needed guards and supplies.<sup>3</sup> Widows, soldier's wives, and poor people received reduced rates. The irregular movement of mail was recorded in such news items: "no mail here for the last two weeks." By October, 1849, the difficulties of communication reached a critical point for the Mormons. The Postal Department discontinued the southern mail route from St. Joseph to Kanesville. Instead, a weekly mail route was established between Des Moines and Kanesville, but it functioned only three times in the first three months. "When shall, and how shall we communicate with our friends in the United States?" asked editor Hyde, who regarded the poor service as discriminatory.<sup>4</sup> In addition, their mail was sometimes rifled.

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, August 1, 1849, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>The Frontier Guardian, June 27, 1849. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., March 7, 1849.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1849.

Martin L. Benson, the soliciting agent for The Frontier Guardian for New York State, mailed remittances for subscriptions to Orson Hyde. Of a total amount of \$42 sent, only \$4 was received at Hyde's office. "Tell those accursed thieves that steal our money, that a Mormon malediction is upon them," Hyde retorted.<sup>1</sup> By 1850, the situation had improved:

Our mails have become so far regulated, and the prospects so favorable, that we will now venture to advise and request our friends and correspondents abroad, to address us at Kanessville, Council Bluffs, Iowa, and no more at St. Joseph, Upper Missouri.<sup>2</sup>

The Frontier Guardian provided another avenue of communication.

The main purpose of publishing a newspaper was to promote Mormon religion; and secondly, to further business at Kanessville; and thirdly, "to instruct and direct the Emigrants to their proper destination."<sup>3</sup> My. Hyde, as editor, interpreted his role as follows: "We are pleased here to give council to the church in the State (Iowa), and act as agent in many things, for the church in the Valley of Great Salt Lake."<sup>4</sup> The personal services offered by The Frontier Guardian were extensive. There were lost, found, and astray notices; protests in behalf of wronged citizens; discussions to acquaint the individual with church doctrines; and general news. It also served as a means of community surveillance, since the Mormon leaders often

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1849.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>The Millennial Star, February 15, 1848, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, January 23, 1850.

acted in the capacity of magistrate and judge.<sup>1</sup> A "High Council" was organized to preside over temporal and spiritual affairs of the camp.<sup>2</sup> The Council's orders, labelled "counsel," were promulgated through the columns of The Frontier Guardian by Orson Hyde, president of the church at Kanesville. Hyde advised, commended, promoted; he criticized, condemned, warned, and if necessary, named offenders outright. If civic pride waned, a mild injunction goaded them into activity. Idleness and intemperance were forbidden.<sup>3</sup> Farmers were encouraged to work hard and were reminded of the previous winter's scarcity of feed.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with the work mandate, Hyde asked that horseracing, cursing, and gambling be curtailed. One resident, William B. Marshall, was "disfellowshipped" for these vices.<sup>5</sup> When stealing was reported to Mr. Hyde, he warned the offenders to make amends or he would publish their names. Furthermore, to reduce the number of grog shops, a license fee was charged. The church under Hyde's direction wielded considerable influence in regulating the whole Kanesville community.

The area surrounding Kanesville was temporarily organized into Pottawattamie County in February of 1849. The General Assembly of Iowa at that time passed an act stipulating

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1849. <sup>2</sup>Babbitt, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>The Frontier Guardian, September 19, 1849.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1849.

<sup>5</sup>The Millennial Star, January 1, 1849, p. 14.

That the county embraced within the limits of what is called the Pottawatamie purchase, on the waters of the Missouri River, in this State, be, and the same be, temporarily organized into a county, by the name of Pottawatamie, at any time when, in the opinion of the judge of the Fourth Judicial District, the public good may require such organization.<sup>1</sup>

The county included the area known as the Pottawattamie Purchase; land negotiated for by the United States in 1846, from the Pottawattamie Indians. The country, which initially included all of twelve and parts of eight present counties,<sup>2</sup> was reduced to its present size in 1851,

The permanent organization of Pottawattamie County occurred on September 21, 1848, under the authorization of Judge James P. Carlton.<sup>3</sup> The first officials were Isaac Clark, Judge of Probate; George Coulsen, Andrew H. Perkins and David O. Yearsly, County Commissioners; Thomas Burdick, County Clerk; John D. Parker, Sheriff; James Sloan, District Clerk; Evan M. Greene, Recorder and Treasurer; Jacob B. Bigler, William Snow, Levi Brackson, and Jonathon C. Wright, Magistrates.<sup>4</sup> All officials chosen were Mormons. This policy continued until the Mormon migration in 1852. During this period, the Mormons controlled elections, filled all public offices, and guided public sentiment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Laws of Iowa, 1846-1847 (Iowa City: A H. Palmer, Printer, 1847), pp. 115-116.

<sup>2</sup>Babbitt, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Iowa Official Register, 1909-1910, (Des Moines: Emory H. English, State Printer, 1909), p. 710.

<sup>4</sup>Laws of Iowa, 1846-1847, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 529.

The Mormons held politics subordinate to their religious beliefs. Nevertheless, they exerted considerable political influence. For instance, during the election campaigns of 1848, the Mormons were in a good position to exact favors from the political parties which were equally divided in strength.

The Democrats attempted to disenfranchise the Mormons at Kanesville in 1848. The Mormons' application to be included in the Fourth Judicial District of Iowa was refused by a Democratic-controlled legislature, who feared that the Mormons would help elect a Whig Judge in that district.<sup>1</sup> Orson Hyde denounced the decision. Expressing faith in the Iowa legislators, he urged them to replace prejudice with justice. He begged the Mormons to be patient with the Democratic-controlled legislature until it was ready to grant constitutional rights. "As ready as they would have been if we had voted the Democratic ticket, which vote was earnestly solicited by runners of the party."<sup>2</sup>

The Democrats accused the Kanesville Mormons of selling their votes to the Whigs in the Congressional election of 1848. William Thompson, a Democrat, and Daniel F. Miller, a Whig, competed for the seat in the U. S. House of Representatives from the First Congressional District. Both candidates coveted the large Mormon vote. The accusation centered around two events. One event involved an ingenious scheme by the Whigs to secure the Mormon vote. Fitz Henry Warren, chairman of the Whig State Committee and Treasurer of the National Committee, met with

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<sup>1</sup>The Frontier Guardian, February 20, 1850.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 23, 1850.



William Pickett. Pickett was the traveling agent of the St. Louis Republican, the leading Mormon paper in Missouri. Shortly after the meeting, Pickett organized an election precinct at Kanesville with the authorization of the county commissioners of Monroe County.<sup>1</sup> In return, Pickett received from Warren \$140 to cover organizational expenses.<sup>2</sup>

A second accusation concerned Orson Hyde's trip east to solicit money for a new printing press, and to confer with Warren on the political situation.<sup>3</sup> After meeting with Warren at Burlington, Iowa, Hyde wrote a letter of instruction to the Mormons at Kanesville:

Burlington, Iowa, July 8, 1848

Dear Friends and Brethren:-It has seemed good to me, your brother and companion in tribulation, and counsellor in the church of God, to advise and request you to cast your votes at the ensuing election for the Whig candidates for office. This letter is placed in the hands of Col. F. H. Warren, who will give you or cause it to be done, all necessary information, how and where to act.

A due respect for our prosperity as a people and for the prosperity of the country at large, has influenced me to give you the above counsel; and with it I give you the assurance of my hearty good will, and an interest in my prayers that Heaven's blessings may rest upon you here, and that His glory may be your reward, where the "wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Your brother in Christ,

\* ORSON HYDE<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Pelzer, "The History and Principles of the Democratic Party of Iowa, 1846-1851," IJHP, VI (1908), 182.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Louis B. Schmidt, "The Miller-Thompson Contest," IJHP, XII (1914), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

While in Burlington, Hyde made arrangements to purchase a printing press. Evidence to substantiate this claim was vague and conflicting.<sup>1</sup> The Democrats charged that money for the printing press had been obtained from Warren. Hyde asserted that he received letters of introduction to men in the East, but no check. Later he obtained his printing press from Cincinnati.<sup>2</sup>

The election results showed 493 votes for the Whig candidate and 30 for the Democratic candidate.<sup>3</sup> The poll-book containing the returns of the Kanesville election was delivered to the clerk of Monroe County at Albia. The clerk refused to receive or count the votes. The poll-book which had been turned over to friends of William Thompson was believed stolen. Later it was found in the possession of Judge Mason, Thompson's counsel.<sup>4</sup> Without the Kanesville votes, Thompson received the certificate of election. When Daniel Miller contested the election because of the Kanesville poll-book, the Committee on Elections in the House of Representatives declared Daniel Miller to be the winner.<sup>5</sup> However, Thompson charged that the majority of Kanesville votes were illegal and those of aliens and minors. A special election was held in which Daniel Miller was elected with an official majority of 662.<sup>6</sup> In reviewing the contest, Hyde questioned,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 45.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Pelzer, op. cit., p. 183.    <sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, March 20, 1850.

<sup>5</sup>The Frontier Guardian, July 10, 1850.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., November 27, 1850.

If the Mormon votes were illegal, why were the Democratic office seekers at Kanesville before the election, courting and soliciting those illegal votes? If they knew that it was our legal right to vote, how much corruption does it show in them to reject our votes and steal our poll-books.<sup>1</sup>

Hyde did not allow the Mormons to forget that they had been charged with selling their votes, that their poll-books had been stolen, and that they had been called aliens. Prior to the election of 1848 the Mormons had voted for the party which was most likely to show them the most favors. Candidates from both parties had frequently made journeys across Iowa to this "Mecca on the Missouri, for the purpose of winning this secluded and peculiar people."<sup>2</sup> After their experiences with the 1848 election campaigns, the Mormons favored the Whigs in politics.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Mormons never intended to remain at Kanesville, they envisioned Kanesville as a staging area for future converts from Europe and the East. While the Mormons were developing their town into a staging area, Kanesville had assumed certain characteristics of a permanent settlement. Promoted by Hyde's newspaper, business establishments became numerous. Manufacturing and merchandizing took place; skilled tradesmen were abundant. Schools were established. The land around Kanesville was worked and improved. Church leaders organized and controlled government and Mormons participation in Iowa political affairs.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., April 18, 1849. <sup>2</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 530-1.

<sup>3</sup>The Frontier Guardian, May 29, 1850.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL, 1849-1852

There were great preparations in this "Camp of Israel" concurrent with these political events. During the summer seasons, Mormons emigrated to their chosen "Zion" in Utah. In the winter, they prepared for these migrations, and although Kanesville was only a place of sojourn, the work of a permanent settlement continued.

In April, 1847, Brigham Young headed the first group, assigned to seek a location for a "stake in Zion."<sup>1</sup> One function of this party was to prepare for future Mormon migrations.<sup>2</sup> Young kept a road-building crew out in front, cutting down gulch banks, bridging creeks where timber was available, and preparing camp sites for the two thousand Mormons who traveled this route during the summer of 1847.<sup>3</sup> Due to previous unpleasant experiences, the Mormons avoided the Gentile emigrants traveling on the Oregon Trail, by following the North side of the Platte River Valley. Some four thousand Mormon pioneers left Kanesville for Utah the following year.<sup>4</sup> In 1849, a company led by George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson included about three hundred wagons with cattle, sheep, goats, hogs, horses,

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, August 1, 1847, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Moody, The Old Trails West (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1963), pp. 285-7.

<sup>3</sup>Earl E. Olson, "The Mormons in Council Bluffs and Winter Quarters. Pioneers from 1846 to 1863," Speech delivered to the Pottawattamie County Historical Society, March 1, 1965.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix E for emigration schedule.

mules, chickens, turkeys, geese, and doves, "besides lots of men, women, and children."<sup>1</sup> This group left Kanesville on July 14, but was caught in snowstorms in the mountains. After this event, efforts were made to get the emigrant trains out earlier.

Capitalizing on the knowledge gained from the first migrations, stirring calls "were sent out in the summer of 1849 to Mormons throughout the United States. Mormons were told to assemble at Kanesville during the summer and fall. Church leaders vowed that they would not cease their exertions "until Zion was redeemed, and all Israel gathered."<sup>2</sup> Saints were advised that plenty of food was available and stock could easily be wintered at Kanesville. Thus Kanesville became the hub of activity year round.

In April, 1849, Orson Hyde asked Kanesville citizens to be prepared to care for from two to three thousand emigrant Mormons due to arrive the following month. Elder Scovil, the Mormon agent at New Orleans, had informed Orson Hyde that three ships carrying Saints had sailed from England. Scovil had then chartered boats at New Orleans to carry them to "the Bluffs."<sup>3</sup> Each family was requested to take in another family of strangers, if possible. Men were called to get the flour, meat, and other provisions ready to feed the multitude.

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<sup>1</sup>The Frontier Guardian, July 25, 1849.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., December 25, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1849.

Food and supplies were plentiful at Kanesville, but shelter became a problem in the summer and fall of 1849. Mormons were warned not to come to Kanesville with the expectation of renting a house or a room, for none was available. They were expected to build houses for themselves when they arrived.<sup>1</sup>

The cost of outfitting and providing for an overland trip to Utah was carefully planned. Through the medium of The Frontier Guardian, emigrants were constantly informed and counseled. Emigrants lacking provisions or financial means to make the trip were advised not to go until they had sufficient money.<sup>2</sup> Editor Hyde published a list of supplies needed to cross the plains--one pound of bread stuffs per day, besides milk, butter, beans, dried fruit, bacon, and various other comforts, were recommended for each person. One hundred pounds of bread stuffs for one person on the road and two hundred pounds per person once he arrived in Utah, to last him six months, was advised.<sup>3</sup> Besides feeding, lodging and planning overland trips for the Mormon emigrants, Hyde also helped them select the proper equipment. Prospective emigrants were urged to gather their wagons, wagon projections, bows, and covers. They were reminded that Kanesville had wagon-makers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. Wagon wheels had to be ironclad, irons for ox-yokes had to be made, and chains had to be prepared. Preplanning was essential to avoid bad weather in the mountains.<sup>4</sup> Before leaving, Hyde admonished emigrants to put in crops and to mend fences.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., August 22, 1849. <sup>2</sup> Ibid., March 21, 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., March 7, 1849. <sup>4</sup> Ibid., January 9, 1850.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

In the summer of 1850, he organized three hundred fifty wagons of Mormon emigrants. He estimated that Mormon emigration would reach seven hundred wagons, including 4,000 sheep and 5,000 head of cattle, horses, and mules.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1849 the Mormon leaders worried about financing mass migrations to Salt Lake. The migration of 1849 had incurred a debt of six thousand dollars.<sup>2</sup> Brigham Young, however, did not want a shortage of money to curb emigration to Salt Lake City. He developed "assisted emigration" by means of a "Perpetual Emigration Fund." Mormons in Utah contributed to the fund by raising five thousand dollars. A bishop was appointed to take the money to Kanesville, buy outfits, and get the poor to the valley. He even extended the fund's services to bringing European converts to America.<sup>3</sup> Precaution always was taken not to allow this fund to be misused. For instance, widows who remarried became ineligible for such aid.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore those who received aid from the poor fund were required to make return to the church; it was just considered a loan. The Church Council supervised every detail of the emigration. The Council divided the emigrating train into companies of fifty wagons each, with a leader for each company. Sometimes the wagons assembled in a single place where Hyde, representing the Church Council, organized companies just before they would cross

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 12, 1850.

<sup>2</sup>The Millennial Star, January 1, 1847, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Gustive O. Larson, "The Story of the Perpetual Emigration Fund." The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVIII, (September, 1931), 186-7.

<sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, December 25, 1850.

the plains. In many cases, the companies were organized before the date of rendezvous. Hyde personally supervised the inspection of teams, wagons, and loads. He warned against too heavy a wagon or one with a stiff tongue.<sup>1</sup> He also directed the wagon trains when to start, for too early a start would mean that grass would not be available for stock;<sup>2</sup> too late a start would find them caught in the early snows of the mountains. Their route was carefully marked out.

By 1850 there were two distinct groups of westward emigrants. The Frontier Guardian began to distinguish between "our" emigration and that of "gold seekers." The discovery of gold in California prompted a tremendous rush of overland migration. Kanesville lay directly on the route of this horde of gold-miners. During the gold rush, emigration through Kanesville was believed to be greater than through St. Joseph and Independence, Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

At Kanesville, ten to fifteen thousand California-bound emigrants halted to buy their supplies and equipment. The influx of "forty-niners," in addition to the Mormons' own heavy migration, taxed the Mormon housing and feeding facilities in 1850. Editor Hyde marvelled at the large numbers of western-bound adventurers, remarking that Kanesville's ten stores were nearly out of all staples and had to send for more.<sup>4</sup>

It is difficult to understand the Mormons' motive of participating in the general outfitting business. Although the business of outfitting

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., June 12, 1850.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid., May 1, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., May 29, 1850.    <sup>4</sup> Ibid., May 1, 1850.



Gentiles promised to be lucrative, Mormons had difficulty outfitting their own emigration of 1849. A shortage of food even was anticipated after the Mormon emigration left Kanesville.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the previous winter had been severe and much of the surplus grain had been consumed by livestock.

This new outfitting business produced a sharp change in Mormon priorities at Kanesville.<sup>2</sup> Late in 1849, Kanesville citizens met and appointed a committee to write a description of Kanesville, with the aim of "putting forth to the world a statement of the resources of the place, to facilitate emigrants to California and to solicit future business." The committee's circular, published in The Frontier Guardian, described business establishments, resources, and possible advantages of this frontier town. A description of Iowa roads and distances between the Missouri River points and the West proved helpful to both Mormons and Gentiles.<sup>3</sup>

Kanesville residents actually neglected their original objectives to migrate to Utah as quickly as possible. They now hoped to develop their town into the leading outfitting center on the Missouri.<sup>4</sup> This would bring personal financial prosperity and prosperity for the church since the church received over one-tenth of its members'

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 7, 1849. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1849.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix F for circular.

<sup>4</sup>Olson, op. cit. See also Douglas C. McMurtrie, "Two Early Issues of the Council Bluffs Press," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, XVIII (October, 1931), 83-4.

incomes. Instructions "from the Valley" told church authorities at Kanesville how to appropriate the collected money.<sup>1</sup>

As leader of the Kanesville Mormons, Orson Hyde directed virtually all phases of life at Kanesville, including economic activity. He promoted the change in priorities via his newspaper. He advised emigrants to cross the Missouri near Kanesville since "this is the most eligible point on the river for the accommodation of emigrants to get removed to various settlements in this region."<sup>2</sup>

The advertising campaign resulted in a large influx of Gentiles. "Among them were gamblers, pick-pockets and all the other parasites of a fluid population."<sup>3</sup> The homogeneity of the Kanesville community was broken by the arrival of the forty-niners.

Resident Mormons detested the establishment of grog shops, referring to them as "a low miserable sink--a place of drunkenness and gambling on the Sabbath day, where men got so filled with whiskey that they blaspheme everything that is good. . . ."<sup>4</sup> The effect of the emigrants on the Kanesville settlement was described by noted historian Ray A. Billington:

As they came by tens of thousands; every boardinghouse was crowded to the doors, every field covered with tents and wagons. Storekeepers jacked up prices mercilessly as miners made last minute purchases; gambling halls and saloons blossomed like magic to lighten their pocketbooks before they started. . . . ferry operators did a huge business at fantastic prices.

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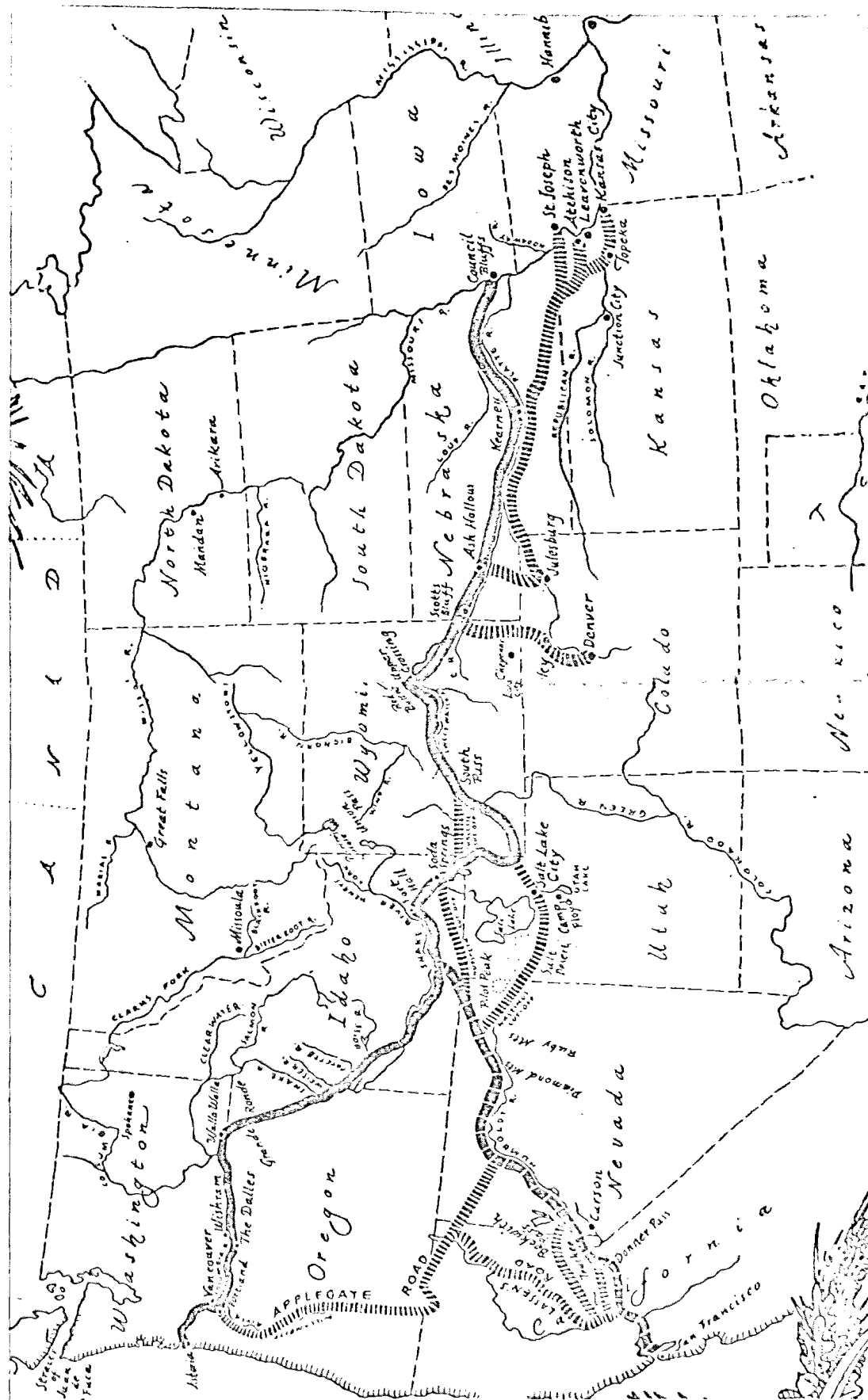
<sup>1</sup>The Frontier Guardian, October 31, 1849.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 9, May 15, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Jay Monaghan, The Overland Trail (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), pp. 343-4.

<sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, May 2, 1849.

Map 3 Routes to the Gold Fields and Oregon



In the first rush men were killed fighting for places on the few boats, but order was gradually restored and lines formed stretching back for miles. Although ferries operated twentyfour hours a day, a two weeks' wait was not unusual.<sup>1</sup>

Not all emigrants left Kanesville. A number of California-bound emigrants, suffering from travel fatigue, chose to make permanent homes at Kanesville. This resulted in an immediate auction.

The ringing of a bell announced the sale, and it seldom fails to collect a crowd . . . general articles of the most worthless description to emigrants are offered. I saw one infatuated lover of bargains who, although he had but one wagon and a sick wife, who would be certain to occupy it always, buy up 'bargains' enough to stock a London 'bottle-wop shop.' Gambling houses and lawyers abound also. Where there are so many wolves there must consequently be a number of victims.<sup>2</sup>

Because the spring of 1850 was dry and cold, west-bound emigrants waited at Kanesville for rains to start the growth of grass. Ten to fifteen thousand California emigrants waited in Kanesville from four to six weeks.<sup>3</sup> This resulted in a near panic situation to "buy-out" the available merchandise. Food prices were high, and corn, hay, and oats became scarce. The difference in prices of commodities between the years 1849 and 1850 is striking. The changes are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Ray Allen Billington, The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Hawkins Piercy, Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley, Brodie, Fawn M., ed. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1962), pp. 98-99.

<sup>3</sup>The Frontier Guardian, May 15, 1850.

Figure 1      DIFFERENCES IN PRICES OF COMMODITIES AT KANESVILLE  
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1849 AND 1850<sup>1</sup>

Item	1849	1850
flour	\$2 - \$2.50 per hundred weight	\$6 - \$6.50
potatoes	25¢ bushel	\$1.00
coffee	constant	constant
sugar	constant	constant
bacon	7¢ lb.	9¢ lb.
eggs	5¢ doz.	10¢ doz.
wheat	50¢ bushel	\$1.50 - \$2.00
corn	25¢ bushel	\$2.25 bushel

Kanesville merchants, realizing the financial opportunities, traveled to St. Louis and other centers to replenish their stores.<sup>2</sup> Mormon emigrants, however, were warned of high prices at Kanesville and urged to buy oxen and wagons before arriving at Kanesville. No such admonition was extended to the Gentiles. However, The Frontier Guardian urged Kanesville residents to accommodate the strangers with housing and to sell merchandise at reasonable prices. "They are strangers among us. Make them as comfortable as you can, and remember that we have been strangers in strange lands."<sup>3</sup> However, many forty-niners objected to the Mormon "hospitality," as their experiences

<sup>1</sup>The prices given above were taken from the months March to May, 1849, and May, 1850. The Frontier Guardian.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1850.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., April 3, 1850.

indicated. One Californian, for instance, called the Mormons the "Yankees or Jews of the Great Plains" because the Mormons took full advantage of the emigrants using "typical Yankee cunning and trickery."<sup>1</sup> For example, Mormons discovered the main crossing places of streams and monopolized them by constructing ferry boats and charging high prices for ferriage. At certain selected places along the trail the Mormons had large herds of fresh animals which they swapped with emigrants for their tired and foot-worn animals at the rate of three for one or better if they could.

At Kaneshville, Mormon profiteering was common. Its success depended upon the gullibility of the emigrants. Items sold included guidebooks and Mormon sun glasses. The guidebooks were regarded to be "as good as most which is practically nothing."<sup>2</sup> Advertised as a deterrent to the ominous threat of blindness resulting from constant exposure to the prairie sun, Mormon sun glasses were sold for one dollar apiece. "Those shoddy spectacles made of sand glass set in a perforated leather strap . . . cost the makers not over five cents and are as useless of productive good as any wooden nutmeg made in Connecticut. . ."<sup>3</sup>

Besides problems involved with the feeding and housing of such large emigrant groups, there was a problem of maintaining order. Some of the transient visitors took corn from Mormon's cribs, chickens

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<sup>1</sup>Archer B. Hulbert, Forty-Niners (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1932), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30. <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

from their back yards, horses, and harnesses. Horses and cattle, the ownership of which was doubtful, were auctioned off daily in the streets. To this Hyde responded, "there are some scaly ones [Californians] among them."<sup>1</sup>

The business of supplying emigrants brought changes to Kanesville. Due to the town's strategic location steamships were able to keep businesses supplied. The steamboats' lucrative ventures to an outfitting point on a main east-west route naturally attracted the attention of merchants and capitalists.<sup>2</sup> New businesses developed; old businesses changed hands. With the influx of Gentiles during the gold rush, many were attracted to Western Iowa. The extent of the Mormon population in the county was probably larger in 1848 than in any subsequent year. The state census of 1849, after many had left for Utah, recorded a population of 6,552; the national census of 1850, showed 7,828.<sup>3</sup>

A new pattern of emigration developed during the season of 1851. Instead of the young, carefree gold seekers, farmers with families dominated the trails. These farmers were generally better supplied. Nevertheless, Kanesville merchants had a sizeable outfitting business.

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<sup>1</sup>The Frontier Guardian, May 1, 1850.

<sup>2</sup>W. S. Burke, An Outline History of Council Bluffs and its Railroads: Showing the Commercial Advantages of the City, Its Rapid Progress in the Past, and its Prospects in the Future (Chicago: Horton & Leonard, 1867).

<sup>3</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 529. The county in 1850 was large. In 1851, it was reduced to its present size. See Appendix G.

Emigration boomed in 1852. Kaneshville drew more emigrants than the rival towns of Independence and St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>1</sup> In part, this large influx of emigration was a result of the promotion by its citizens. Emigrant guide books were published and distributed. A second newspaper, The Bugle, boasted of the volume of business activity at Kaneshville.

No less than fifteen thousand have passed through . . . within the last two months. Within that time, not less than \$150,000 worth of merchandise has been sold . . . where one single firm has had to lay out over four thousand dollars to settle freight bills, the conclusion is quite clear that the sum total of goods consumed has been enormous.<sup>2</sup>

One emigrant who remained to work recalled, "I have seen as many as a thousand teams encamped there at once completing their outfitting and getting ready for their long journey."<sup>3</sup> While waiting to cross the river, many emigrants fell prey to the whiskey slingers, gamblers, fast women, and thieves.

Everyone seemed willing, and anxious to risk his all on the turn of a card or a throw of dice. . . . The principal drinking and gambling place was called the Gem saloon, a long log building with a bar at each end and card tables and a complete gambling outfit in the center. . . . The sound of clicking glasses, the rattle of dice,<sup>4</sup> the drunken oath, the Bacchanalian song never died out.

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, "The Jumping-Off Places on the Overland Trail," The Frontier Re-examined, McDermott, John R., ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>The Western Bugle, June 16, 1852.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas J. Bunn, "Council Bluffs in 1852," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, V (July, 1902), 455.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 455-6.



This "Gentile spirit" was a premonition of the town's character following the Mormon exodus from Kanesville. The Mormons were faced with the choice of financial prosperity at Kanesville or migration to Utah. Under the leadership of Orson Hyde, the Mormons had held a privileged position in Western Iowa. The Kanesville Saints became quite content to live in the bourgeois happiness of rising land values, sufficient food and shelter. The church hierarchy at Salt Lake City found it necessary to extend repeated admonitions for their failure to emigrate.<sup>1</sup>

By 1851 Brigham Young had become impatient at the delay of the Mormons on the Missouri. Since 1850 the church leadership at Salt Lake had used spiritual persuasion "to push on the Zion." Young was becoming alarmed at the leadership of the lingering group. He had begun to hear the expression, "Brighamite and Hydeite."<sup>2</sup> He was afraid of a schism, that the Mormons on the Missouri might shift their vision from a "New Zion" in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake to the reality of a permanent residence in Southwestern Iowa. Thus a call, almost peremptory in tone, was issued:

Beloved Brethren--We send unto you, our beloved brethren, Ezra T. Benson and Jedediah M. Grant, for the special purpose of counselling and assisting you to come to this place . . . Come to this place with them next season; and fail not. Come, there is no more time for

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<sup>1</sup>D. C. Bloomer, "The Mormons in Iowa," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, II (January, 1897), 600.

<sup>2</sup>The Frontier Guardian, June 24, 1849.

Saints to hesitate what course they will pursue. We have been calling to the Saints in Pottawattamie, ever since we left them, to come away; but there has continually been an opposing spirit whispering, "Stay another year, and get a better outfit," . . . As a former prophet said, "If a man will not gather when he has a chance, he will be afflicted with the Devil." . . . What are you waiting for? Have you any good excuse for not coming? No! You can come here with greater comfort and safety than did the Pioneers who had nothing to come to . . . we wish you to evacuate Pottawattamie and the States.

Young, Brigham

Kimball, Hever C.

Richards, Willard

Epistle to the Saints  
in Pottawattamie<sup>1</sup>

The epistle of 1851 was the forerunner of plans for the final exodus. In 1852 an order came to Pottawattamie and word was sent around that all true believers in the creed of Joseph Smith, as taught by the vice regent, Brigham Young, should gather around the great central temple in Utah.<sup>2</sup>

The first suggestion of a final Mormon exodus from Kanesville came in February, 1852, when Orson Hyde announced the sale of The Frontier Guardian.<sup>3</sup> With their departure in 1852 they needed to dispose of their property. Brigham Young urged the Kanesville Mormons not to sacrifice their property. He advised that they sell the property for real value, or to turn the property over to an agent of the church "for the benefit of the poor."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Millennial Star, January 15, 1852, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 532.

<sup>3</sup>Olson, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>The Frontier Guardian, September 21, 1851.

As a result, choice farms were for sale. The bill of sale on one such farm noted the presence of limestone on the place, a location near the ferry and the mouth of the Platte River, and the road from Kanesville to St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>1</sup>

Hyde was not ardent in urging the Mormons at Kanesville to sell out and move on. As early as 1850 he asked the question, "Shall I sell my farm, my house and improvements and remove to the Valley in the Spring?" He predicted that Kanesville and its surrounding area were destined to become an important point for trade, agriculture, and general business. He said it would be one of the most important starting points for emigration to Salt Lake, Oregon, California, and the Western frontier. Property would increase in value. But he advised Mormons to sell only if they could get favorable reimbursements for their possessions and considerably more. They were told to sell for cash or not at all.<sup>2</sup>

After the 1852 call to come to Utah, Hyde's advice was not heeded:

Farms were sold for a few hundred dollars; claims were bargained off for a span of horses or a wagon; lots in Kanesville were exchanged for a yoke of oxen, and cabins and storerooms for a few articles of furniture and provisions.<sup>3</sup>

Phraseology used by Mormons in their deeds to property is unique.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel S. Bayliss, who came to Kanesville in 1852, purchased the bishop's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., January 22, 1851.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 27, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 532-3.

<sup>4</sup>A United States land office was not established in Pottawattamie County until 1852. Land sales began the following year. Babbitt, op. cit., p. 20.

house. This was the place where the Mormons paid their tithes. The deed read, "Jesus Christ and the Church of Latter-Day Saints sell to Samuel S. Bayliss; . . ." and was signed by Orson Hyde.<sup>1</sup>

Living at the gateway of the West had been profitable. New possibilities in Utah were not as potentially gratifying as their present situation. The drive of temporal fortune, weighed against religious zeal grown cold, made some reluctant to follow the trail.

President Hyde had diverse interests which might have been more personally satisfying. His publishing business was a profitable venture, he conducted a stage and freighting business; and he had been admitted to the bar. All of these presented widening opportunities.<sup>2</sup> He had become the recognized leader in Kanesville of Gentiles and Mormons.

Hyde was asked frequently if he were going to the Valley. His reply was that he was appointed to stay on the Missouri. He admitted that he liked his situation because, he felt he was doing more good in Kanesville than anywhere else. However, when ordered by his superior, he would obey as readily as any "Brighamite."<sup>3</sup> When the summer came in 1852, he led the last caravan from the Missouri camp.

Of the Mormons who remained around Kanesville, a few abjured the faith altogether; others, refusing to recognize Brigham Young as their prophet, adhered to Joseph Smith, Jr. The latter group organized a

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 672.

<sup>2</sup>The Frontier Guardian, March 6, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

church at Council Bluffs in 1861 known today as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.<sup>1</sup> A small group of the original Mormons remained at Kanesville, but the majority were of the "reorganized" faith.

The vacuum created by the Mormon exodus was soon filled by Gentiles, who literally swarmed into Kanesville. The "Gentile spirit" of gambling, drinking, and crime, no longer checked by the ecclesiastical dominance of the Mormons, became part of the major pattern of life.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the city operated its government the first six months from revenue collected solely from saloons and gambling houses for licenses.<sup>3</sup>

The "new" Kanesville was described by the English writer and artist Frederick Piercy as a dirty and expensive place full of "sharpers." He advised prospective emigrants to see the cow milked before buying. Travellers buying bacon or biscuits should taste them, and emigrants buying oxen to test them in the yoke before paying for them. Attempting to prepare emigrants, Piercy recommended a dress code: "Fustian trowsers," red Guernsey shirts, high-top boots, goggles, that men wear beards, and ladies short skirts, "India rubber goloshes," and very large sun bonnets.<sup>4</sup>

Gentile businessmen were attracted to Kanesville's strategic location. Many set up branch stores for St. Louis firms. Cornelius Voorhis entered into partnership with the St. Louis firm of Eddy, Jamison, and Company

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., IX, 533.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. Perkins, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (Council Bluffs, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>The First Presbyterian Church of Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1856-1956.

<sup>4</sup>Piercy, op. cit., pp. 98-101.

and opened a general outfitting store in Kanesville. William B. Ferguson and B. P. Pegram also opened branch stores. Another St. Louis businessman, Joseph Tootle, started an outfitting store which was called the "Elephant Store." Other Gentile businessmen included W. D. Turner, S. H. Riddle, and J. L. Forman.

Mormon church officials at Salt Lake City complained about extortions practiced on Mormon emigrants by Kanesville merchants and traders. This, coupled with the health hazards in the form of cholera on the Missouri bottoms, caused church officials to change the point of its outfitting to Keokuk, Iowa in 1853.<sup>1</sup> This change of location did not adversely affect the financial situation of the Council Bluffs merchants, however. The Western Bugle boasted that an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 emigrants had outfitted at Council Bluffs on their way to California, Oregon, and Utah.<sup>2</sup>

Through a concerted effort by Kanesville Mormons to advertise their town as an outfitting center to Gentiles, many Gentiles were attracted to Western Iowa. With the large emigration of 1852, many additions were made to the Gentile population. Bugle editor Charles H. Babbitt compared the population of Kanesville in 1849, with that of 1853. In 1849 the population was 7,000; in 1853, after the final exodus of Mormons, 2,000 to 2,500.<sup>3</sup> Gentiles had no difficulty taking over Mormon business establishments, but Kanesville lacked the leadership, organization,

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<sup>1</sup>William A. Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), pp. 416-7.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Western Bugle, September 21, 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Babbitt, op. cit., p. 17.

and order that the Mormons had provided under Hyde. It took the Gentiles several years to reunite the various elements in the Kaneshville community to work for common goals and to restore the town to its former position of prominence on the Missouri River.

## CHAPTER 5

### NEW LEADERSHIP, 1853-1856

Following the Mormon exodus, Gentile businessmen and professional men assumed leadership at Kaneshville and petitioned the Iowa legislature to have the name of their town changed to "Council Bluffs."<sup>1</sup> The Iowa Legislature complied on January 19, 1853. By altering the name of their town, Council Bluffs residents anticipated future prosperity since the Mississippi and Missouri River Railroad Charter stipulated that it would build across Iowa to "Council Bluffs." The residents hoped to capitalize on the coming railroad business by using the name, Council Bluffs, which previously had designated a large geographic area.<sup>2</sup>

In February, 1853, Council Bluffs was incorporated as a city, making it a corporate body and giving it all the power and attributes of a municipal corporation.<sup>3</sup> The elections, which followed in April, reflected the Gentile takeover of Council Bluffs. Cornelius Voorhis, a businessman, was elected mayor; Samuel S. Bayliss, farmer, businessman, and land speculator was elected councilman; S. T. Carey, clerk of the district court, became councilman; two of the Robinson brothers served

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan P. Dodge, "Early Emigration Through and to Council Bluffs," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, XVIII (January, 1932), 174.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the Early History of Pottawattamie County," Annals of Iowa, First Series, XI (October, 1871), 674.



as marshall and recorder respectively; J. E. Johnson, publisher, postmaster, farmer, and merchant, was elected councilman; and G. A. Robinson, an attorney, and fire marshall, became a councilman.<sup>1</sup>

The newly elected leaders of Council Bluffs had difficulty maintaining law and order in their cosmopolitan community. The sheriff and magistrates were helpless in dealing with the fluid population outfitting at Council Bluffs. As a result, Mayor Voorhis resigned several months after his election. From than time until new elections were held in the spring of 1855, "the city government appears to have been in abeyance."<sup>2</sup>

Liquor laws were difficult to enforce. A branch of the Sons of Temperance was set up at Council Bluffs in 1855. This organization was unsuccessful in prohibiting the sale of liquor or the closing of saloons. Ten years later the situation had not improved. Drinking, gambling, and Sunday desecration continued as long as emigrants outfitted at Council Bluffs.<sup>3</sup>

The conspicuous lack of law and order at Council Bluffs was recalled by an early resident. "They'd hang a man for stealing a horse quicker than they would for killing a man," Zephaniah Hughes recollected when he commented on the town's obsession with property rights.<sup>4</sup> Civil authorities found it even harder to enforce laws during seasons when emigrants were in the majority at Council Bluffs. During the emigration season of 1853, a California-bound man named Samuels was killed at

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 675.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>D. C. Bloomer Diary, January 19, 1865.

<sup>4</sup>Council Bluffs Nonpareil, December 10, 1939.

Council Bluffs. Other emigrants captured Muir, the suspect. Although Muir was initially turned over to the sheriff, he was tried jointly before emigrants and citizens rather than the usual judge and jury. After a guilty verdict and a confession to the crime, Muir was hanged. This was one of the first lynchings at Council Bluffs.<sup>1</sup>

Another West-bound emigrant was hanged for refusing to answer questions posed by vigilantes. Two relatives from Mills County, learning about the death, threatened the vigilantes. To prevent any further difficulties, the committee hanged both men from Mills County.<sup>2</sup> Another suspect was hanged for stealing \$1.65. In 1865, several robberies had been committed in Council Bluffs. A suspect named Lacey was captured and taken to the jail referred to as the "Cottonwood Jail." Before Lacey received the benefit of a trial, Bloomer predicted that the suspect "will most likely be hung."<sup>3</sup> When the vigilantes became convinced that Lacey was guilty, the committee hanged Lacey in the middle of the city rather than wait for the tedious process of a trial.<sup>4</sup>

These incidents illustrate the impulsive nature of the Council Bluffs residents regarding justice. The residents respected the law but were impatient with the judicial system. The technicalities of

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<sup>1</sup>Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil, July 25, 1920. Bloomer, op. cit., XI (October, 1871), 677.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Nonpareil, December 10, 1939.

<sup>3</sup>Bloomer Diary, June 2, 4, 1865.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Black, "Lynchings in Iowa," IJHP, X (April 1912), 218.

presenting evidence and slow, formal trial procedures seemed unwarranted to these frontier settlers.

The citizens were proud of their frequently-used jail. It was made of planks three inches thick, doubled so as to break joints and filled with spikes driven in so thickly that cutting out was virtually impossible.<sup>1</sup> However, in 1866 the Cottonwood Jail was burned with one man inside. "Supposed to be the work of ruffians with which the city is full," Bloomer recalled.<sup>2</sup>

The new leadership continued but enlarged on the Mormon practice of promoting their city as an outfitting center for Western emigration. Emigrant guides and maps were published. The Bugle, edited by one of the few remaining Mormons, J. E. Johnson, printed promotional material. In addition to mustering support for emigrants to outfit at their city, the leaders advised prospective emigrants to settle in Western Iowa. The new promotional material appealed to disadvantaged Easterners using a get-rich-quick philosophy. "Come to the West, where the air is unpolluted by the breath of crowded cities, and the malaria of disease which arises from the dense and motley masses of humanity . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Let the starving unemployed thousands of the East come here and live, we have bread enough, and to spare. . . . Let a man be industrious here, and though never so poor, he will soon be comfortable and above board, with a snug farm. . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. H. Field, "Council Bluffs Forty Years Ago."

<sup>2</sup>Bloomer Diary, November 24, 1866.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Chronotype, July 25, 1855.

<sup>4</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, January 9, 1854.

Other propaganda material appealed to the Eastern farmer. It advertised Western Iowa as having a good climate, rich inexpensive soil, and lower taxes. "The impression is very general among our farming people, that they can advance their interests by selling out and going to Iowa."<sup>1</sup> An Eastern correspondent reported, "High taxes here, and cheap and fertile lands there, are producing their inevitable results. . . . The owner of a hundred acres can sell here, and purchase a large farm on the Missouri, and have considerable means for improvement left."<sup>3</sup> Additional appeals were made to Europeans who were dissatisfied with their political system:

The West presents the highest inducements for all mankind . . . to the unfortunate exile from tyranny, she offers a secure asylum . . . Old Europe, shackling with her accursed system of monarchy the mental and physical energies of her population, has nothing to attach them to her soil . . . The repeated failures of the revolutionary movements in Europe, is another stimulant of the immigration to the U. S. and the West. Defeated in their efforts for freedom these--suffering persecution of body and confiscation for the privileges and blessings they had vainly searched for in their Fatherland.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the eastern Iowa communities, which had similar outfitting aspirations, also utilized their newspapers to lure emigrants. During the 1855 emigration season, the rival outfitting towns of Burlington, Keokuk, and Des Moines spread rumors that Indian atrocities had been committed in the Council Bluffs area.<sup>5</sup> To counteract such rumors, Council Bluffs editors launched a massive campaign.

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<sup>1</sup>Council Bluffs Chronotype, January 1, 1855.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 7, 1855.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, January 9, 1854.

<sup>4</sup>Council Bluffs Chronotype, January 3, 1855.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1855.

At every town along the stage routes leading from the Mississippi to this city, passengers are beset upon all sides, by numerous . . . speculators . . . who inform them of the horrible depredations which are daily being committed by the Indians along the border settlements of the Missouri, and that they will surely be scalped, if, in their pergrinations, they should chance to set foot in Western Iowa or Nebraska.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately for the Council merchants, the town's newspapers were able to refute reports of Indian atrocities along the Missouri River. If such rumors had not been quelled, migration would have declined.<sup>2</sup>

The promotion campaign was successful. The Chronotype reported the arrival of numerous settlers during the period 1853-1856. "We learn that the greater portion of those that have visited this city, have purchased property here, and design settling."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the Bugle noted "Our streets are daily thronged with emigrants, intending to locate in W. Iowa and Nebraska. The emigration this fall has surpassed that of any other season, with a view of permanent settlement now broad and expansive."<sup>4</sup> A regular line of steamers, averaging twenty a month, navigated between St. Joseph and Council Bluffs during migration seasons. "People from everywhere are pouring into this city. There is scarcely an hour in the day; but what witnesses the arrival of the emigrant."<sup>5</sup>

Western emigration through Council Bluffs was significantly increased by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. The Act, sponsored and carried through Congress by Senator Stephen H. Douglas, provided that the region west of the Missouri River be divided into

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 14, 1855. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., April 25, 1855.

<sup>4</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, November 13, 1855.

<sup>5</sup>Council Bluffs Chronotype, May 9, 1855.

two territories--Kansas and Nebraska. The boundaries of Kansas, similar to its present-day boundaries, extended to the Rocky Mountains. The Nebraska territory included the region north to the 49th parallel. At a future date, settlers were to decide the question of slavery. As a result of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the entire nation plunged into new arguments over the slavery question.<sup>1</sup>

Historians have offered several reasons to explain Douglas' interests in the Kansas-Nebraska Act. As a railroad promoter, Douglas would have been interested in securing a right-of-way through Nebraska for a railroad to the Pacific. As a believer in frontier democracy, Douglas felt that popular sovereignty would solve the slavery issue peaceably in a new territory.<sup>2</sup> As a real estate owner, Douglas could expect to gain financially.<sup>3</sup>

The formation of the Nebraska Territory directly affected Council Bluffs' role as an outfitting center. For instance, the government made a provision to aid the progress of settlement and defense of the Nebraska Territory. It appropriated \$50,000 for the improvement of the Mormon Trail from Omaha to New Fort Kearney, located at the southern bend of the Platte River.<sup>4</sup> The supply route to the frontier outposts was shortened since military supplies could be moved more quickly and

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<sup>1</sup>Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 597-600.

<sup>2</sup>Allen Johnson, Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 281-283.

<sup>3</sup>Frank H. Hodder, "The Railroad Background of the Kansas-Nebraska Act," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XII (June, 1925), 3-22.

<sup>4</sup>W. Turrentine Jackson, Wagon Roads West (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 121.

cheaply up to the Missouri River to Council Bluffs. From there the supplies were transported overland on a shorter route to the West. When completed, the road was promoted in emigrant guide books published at Council Bluffs as "a good wagon road for the greater part of the year."<sup>1</sup>

The improvement of the Mormon Trail, lower fares, technical improvements in steamboat transportation to Council Bluffs, and a saving of 200 miles of land transportation led to a sharp decline in covered wagon traffic from St. Joseph and Kansas City.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the opening of the Nebraska Territory brought a yearly redistribution of three to four hundred thousand dollars in government supply contracts from the Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas area to the Council Bluffs area.<sup>3</sup>

Council Bluffs residents eagerly sought the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, since they hoped to benefit financially from outfitting settlers on their way to Nebraska. For a time, Council Bluffs became the commercial center for the new settlers of Nebraska.<sup>4</sup> The town's printing presses published The Omaha Arrow, Omaha's first newspaper.<sup>5</sup>

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act also brought railroad fever to Iowans. Iowa became a strategic link between Chicago and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>2</sup>Merrill J. Mattes, "The Jumping-Off Places on the Overland Trail," The Frontier Re-examined, McDermott, John F., ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 27-39. See Appendix H.

<sup>3</sup>William H. Goetzmann, Army Explorations in the American West, 1803-1863 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 368.

<sup>4</sup>J. R. Perkins, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Council Bluffs, 1956).

<sup>5</sup>Homer H. Field and Joseph R. Reed, History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, I (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1907), 23, 27.

the West, since it provided the shortest and best route to the Missouri River.<sup>1</sup> Many Iowa towns competed for the honors and profits involved in serving as a Western terminus. Furthermore, three Eastern railroads vied for financial grants and the honor of becoming the first transcontinental railroad.<sup>2</sup>

The Chicago and Rock Island was the first railroad to cross Illinois from Chicago to the Mississippi River. Beginning in May, 1853, it continued to survey to the Missouri River through Iowa. The builders of the Rock Island had organized a subsidiary company, the Mississippi and Missouri River Railroad Company<sup>3</sup> to run from Rock Island to a point on the Missouri River. Interested in the Western railroad boom, Grenville Dodge joined a Rock Island surveying crew headed by Peter A. Dey. Later the M & M commissioned these men to survey across Iowa.<sup>4</sup>

The M & M was challenged in its Iowa survey by the Lyons and Iowa Central Railroad, which was the predecessor of the Chicago and North Western. Originally, this Lyons road was to extend from Lyons, Iowa, on the Mississippi River, to Council Bluffs via Des Moines. However, when Eastern financiers became interested in the project, the route was altered. It included Cedar Rapids but bypassed Des Moines.<sup>5</sup> This line was more popularly known as the Iowa Central Air Line since its

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<sup>1</sup>J. R. Perkins, Trails, Rails and War (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), pp. 18, 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Stanley P. Hirshson, Grenville M. Dodge (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. <sup>5</sup>Perkins, op. cit., p. 24.



promoters, attempting to beat the M & M survey across Iowa, "ignored the topography of the country and ran their line to the Missouri River as the crow flies."<sup>1</sup> Adams, one of Lyons & Iowa Central's promoters from New York, preceded the surveyors and mustered public support. His speech was "so eloquent and persuasive that Iowans could almost hear the whistle of the oncoming locomotives and various counties voted bonds."<sup>2</sup> Another Lyons and Iowa Central employee, surveyor Samuel R. Curtis, reached Iowa City two weeks ahead of Dodge and Dey. Beyond Iowa City, however, the survey became a mere reconnaissance, for Dodge and Dey caught up with Curtis. The race for Council Bluffs was on.

The M & M surveying party headed by Dodge and Dey reached Council Bluffs on November 22, 1853. "The citizens welcomed us," said Dodge, "pleased and excited over the possibility of a railroad coming to them, so they gave us a reception and a ball."<sup>3</sup> Several days later Curtis and the Lyons Air Line survey party arrived, receiving a similar welcome.

At the time, Council Bluffs newspapers further stimulated interest in the railroad survey:

With all modesty, we must confess to a partiality for a certain point, as the Western terminus on the Missouri River, and that point is Council Bluffs--it being situated at the most reliable crossing of the 'mad Missouri' . . . It is true, there are 'great efforts being made to divide and divert railroad enterprises' throughout the State, which we sincerely hope may not prevail, for such a suicidal policy cannot do otherwise than prove disastrous to all.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. <sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Council Bluffs Chronotype, February 28, 1855.

And the editors did not hesitate to reprimand inactive citizens.

Vital interests are at issue. Our growth, our wealth, our home convenience, our very existence as a corporation depend upon an enterprise of no other kind, and yet, there is a seeming backwardness, and a proneness to stand still manifested by our citizens, arising from the fact that they really neglect to manifest what they most deeply feel.<sup>1</sup>

Further citizen support was shown through weekly railroad meetings and the election of committees. The goals of such meetings were described in the following account:

On a motion, a committee of three was appointed to correspond with the different towns and points along the projected roads, asking their co-operation in these enterprises, and inviting their attention to the project of holding a convention, to take into consideration these important matters. . . . All were unanimous in the opinion, that the Road from this city to St. Joseph, can and must be built, and that the sooner measures were taken to form a company to build the Road, the sooner we would be greeted with the presence of the 'Iron Horse.'<sup>2</sup>

In spite of enthusiastic support, railroad building and promotion was halted due to the Panic of 1857. Prospects were not renewed until the 1860's.

A rivalry developed between Council Bluffs-Omaha and Florence, Nebraska, for the Western terminus of the M & M. Grenville Dodge, who meanwhile had established a business at Council Bluffs, led the battle for Council Bluffs against a powerful land-bank group from Davenport with large holdings in and around the village of Florence. To convince the directors of the M & M, Dodge predicted that it would cost the company an extra quarter million dollars to pass up Council Bluffs,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1855.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 9, 1855.

swing the line to the north of the original survey, and cross the Missouri River to Florence. "His estimates may have been about two hundred thousand dollars high, but he won his point."<sup>1</sup>

The railroad promoter Thomas C. Durant, noted for his ability to create rivalry; John A. Dix, president of the M & M; and Henry Farnam, the road's builder, stimulated the fight for the terminus between Council Bluffs and Florence to get the counties to vote bonds in favor of their railroad.<sup>2</sup> Farnam urged Pottawattamie county to vote \$300,000 in bonds. The company would then begin to grade at Council Bluffs and work east across Iowa, assuring the citizens that the line would not be built north to Florence.<sup>3</sup> Farnam made a similar offer to Omaha, a partner of Council Bluffs.<sup>4</sup> It was a clever move since the M & M needed additional funds. Durant, cognizant of the large volume of emigration, realized early that both Omaha and Council Bluffs were inevitable termini for future transcontinental railroad building.<sup>5</sup>

After eliminating Florence from the contest, a new rivalry took place. Up to this point, Omaha and Council Bluffs had worked together to secure the terminus for Council Bluffs, but Council Bluffs feared Omaha.<sup>6</sup> To allay the fears of Council Bluffs residents, the directors of the M & M appealed to the citizens to vote the desired bonds, promising that they "would commence work at the Missouri River and grade east."

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<sup>1</sup>Perkins, op. cit., pp. 38-39. <sup>2</sup>Hirshson, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup>Perkins, op. cit., pp. 39-40. <sup>4</sup>Hirshson, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Perkins, op. cit., p. 39. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 40-41.

<sup>7</sup>Hirshson, op. cit., p. 27.

The bonds were voted June 13, 1857; but in October the road, not yet begun, went into receivership when a national panic forced the collapse of the M & M company.<sup>1</sup>

The anticipated railroad construction to Council Bluffs focused attention on public lands in the area. As early as 1849, land agencies developed at Council Bluffs. These early land agencies developed out of the continuous changes in property between Mormons and Gentiles. One of these real estate men, Daniel Mackintosh, conducted a profitable business. Mackintosh charged fifty cents when the property was registered for sale.<sup>2</sup>

In 1851 and 1852 public lands in Pottawattamie County were surveyed. Shortly afterwards a land office was set up at Council Bluffs. Joseph H. D. Street served as register and S. M. Ballard as receiver. It was the receiver's task to take the collected money to Dubuque, Iowa. Only gold and silver were acceptable as land payment. At first the receiver, accompanied by several armed men, transported \$30,000-\$40,000 by buggy to Dubuque. As the deposits increased, the route was changed: Money was shipped by steamboat from Council Bluffs to Dubuque via St. Louis, or a coach was chartered to deliver the money.<sup>3</sup>

The sale of land began in 1853. Between March and May, 1853, 23,994 acres of public land were entered at Council Bluffs, all under

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<sup>1</sup>Hirshson, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>The Frontier Guardian, February 20, 1850.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Nonpareil, July 25, 1920.

the pre-emption law.<sup>1</sup> In June, 1853, 1,300 acres of government land were sold for the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre.<sup>2</sup> Large quantities of government lands were bought with cash or located with land warrants. The boom year, 1856, showed a record sale. By the time the land office was closed in May, 1856, the total entries at Council Bluffs reached over 200,000 acres. This rush was prompted by news of the passage of the law making large donations of public lands in aid to four railroad lines building across Iowa and news that an order would be issued closing all land offices in Iowa.<sup>3</sup> Land prices also increased in adjacent areas. Prices of lots in Council Bluffs shot up. A choice main street business location which sold for \$40 in 1852, sold for \$200 in 1855. By 1856, this same lot sold for \$2,000.<sup>4</sup>

Multitudes of "land hungry," far-sighted easterners, realizing Council Bluffs' strategic location relative to railroad construction and the newly opened Nebraska Territory, came to invest in land. These "land hungry" men included railroad officials, lawyers, and businessmen who had lived for a few years at Council Bluffs.<sup>5</sup> In 1856, Grenville Dodge, railroad surveyer, formed a banking and real estate business with John T. Baldwin from Pennsylvania. They devoted most of their time to selling lots and locating land warrants, but eventually they became involved

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., XI (October, 1871), 679.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 678. Council Bluffs Western Bugle, September 21, 1853.

<sup>3</sup>Bloomer, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Perkins, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (Council Bluffs, 1956).

<sup>5</sup>Field and Reed, op. cit., p. 26.

in speculation and the bribery of public officials.<sup>1</sup> The Dodge and Baldwin firm epitomized the business philosophy on the frontier: They had the "right" ingredients for a successful business; "a yearning for large rewards, a propensity to seek out and act upon inside information, a desire to bring people of fame, wealth, and influence into their operations, and a willingness to use methods bordering on the immoral and illegal."<sup>2</sup> Another land speculator, Benjamin Pegram, a Virginian, founded banks on both sides of the Missouri River.<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Bayliss, a land speculator and a civic-minded resident, practically gave away 400 acres adjacent to the center of Council Bluffs. Mr. Bayliss from the first pursued a very liberal course in disposing of his property, giving many lots away and selling others . . . at a very low price."<sup>4</sup> Although his primary motive was to promote the future growth of Council Bluffs, Bayliss ultimately profitted. A devastating fire on November 13, 1854, destroyed twenty-five buildings. A year later a second fire destroyed an additional seventeen buildings. Bayliss, who owned a brick yard, sold bricks for more permanent buildings.<sup>5</sup>

By 1856 several larger and longer lasting buildings were erected. The Empire Block was three stories high, eighty feet wide by eighty

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<sup>1</sup>Hirshson, op. cit., p. 23. Council Bluffs Bugle, February 12, 1856.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24. Other speculators active in promoting Council Bluffs as a staging area included R. L. Douglas, A. V. Larimer, James D. Test, H. D. Johnson, A. J. Poppleton, J. M. Palmer, and Marshall Turley. Field and Reed, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., XI (October, 1871), 675-676.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 675, 678.

feet deep. It was the first block of brick buildings erected above St. Joseph.<sup>1</sup> Soon after the Phoenix Block was completed. Public buildings included a large log court house, the Cottonwood Jail, and a post office. The county and city offices and two public schools were held in rented rooms in different parts of the city. Five hotels catered to the travelers. The Pacific House, a three-story brick structure, was the most pretentious. The Robinson House and the Union were constructed of logs covered with weatherboards. The City Hotel and the five banking houses, a toy shop, book store, a ball alley, a picture gallery, numerous land and real estate offices and several new saloons were among the business additions of this period.<sup>2</sup>

Communications improved. Council Bluffs was linked to St. Louis and Kansas City by steamer. The Western Stage Company coaches provided regular service to points east of Council Bluffs. Frost's line of stages connected Council Bluffs to St. Joseph. Sioux City could be reached by hacks. To the West, Harle's four-horse buggies connected Council Bluffs to Omaha via the steam ferry.

Prosperity came to Council Bluffs during the mid-fifties. The two newspapers launched a massive campaign to publicize Council Bluffs as an outfitting center and as a future railroad center. Ordinary citizens became involved in the railroad meetings by voting bonds hoping to lure railroad companies to choose their city for its terminus. Land speculation

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., XII(April, 1872), 130-1.

<sup>2</sup> Field and Reed, op. cit., p. 23.

ran high. Many professional people, who later provided leadership in railroading enterprises, were attracted to Council Bluffs.

Rival towns such as Glenwood, Iowa, and Florence, Nebraska, challenged the monopoly in the outfitting business, and in the summer of 1854, a future competitor, Omaha, was organized. Newspaper editors rallied to the support of their local towns with their propagandizing materials. Truth was often distorted in the heat of the contest.



## CHAPTER 6

### "SPEARHEAD OF THE FRONTIER, 1857-1862"

For fifteen years prior to 1857 the country had enjoyed increasing prosperity. Gold discoveries in the Far West had precipitated the gold rush of 1849 and encouraged movement from the cities. As migration accelerated demands for transportation, railroads expanded rapidly.

The nation, in a word, was never before so rich in population, in manufacturers, in internal improvements, in minerals and precious metals. . . the demand for labor was greater than the supply. This has been shown by the constant increase of wages; the unsupplied demand for labor at the south and west; and the endeavor at the north to cheapen the cost of human toil, by the introduction of labor saving machinery.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1857 a rash of bank and other business failures, suddenly appeared, particularly in the new and over-expanded West.<sup>2</sup> Not only was there deep concern over the situation in the United States, but gloom apparently prevailed throughout the world, as illustrated by the following editorial in Harper's Weekly:

Not for many years--not in the life time of most men who read this paper--has there been so much grave and deep apprehension, never has the future seemed so incalculable as at this time. In our own country there is a universal commercial prostration and panic . . . In France the political caldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty; Russia hangs as usual, like a cloud, dark and silent upon the horizon of Europe; while all the energies, resources and influences of the British Empire are sorely tried, and are yet to be tried more sorely,

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<sup>1</sup>New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1858, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Earnest Ludlow Bogart, An Economic History of the United States. 3d. ed. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1921), p. 240.

in coping with the vast and deadly Indian insurrection  
and with its disturbed relations in China.<sup>1</sup>

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The Panic of 1857 resulted in widespread unemployment in such cities as Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Indianapolis. President James Buchanan attributed the panic entirely to our "vicious system of paper currency and bank credits, exciting the people to wild speculations and gambling in stocks."<sup>2</sup> Others attributed the malady to a variety of interrelated factors such as undue expansion, excessive railroad building, speculative real estate boom, bubbles of business excitement resulting from gold discoveries, enormous loans, insecure banknotes and rampant greed in the scramble for quick fortunes.<sup>3</sup>

The beginning of a financial crash in the Missouri valley was marked by the closing of the Benton banking house, a Council Bluffs branch of the firm of Greene, Weare and Benton, in September. "All my money was in Benton's bank which failed," D. C. Bloomer recalled.<sup>4</sup> A number of other residents suffered similar losses in 1857. Benton made earnest and persistent efforts to meet his obligations but was unable to repay and lost his homestead in the process. When Nebraska banks collapsed one after another, their bills became worthless.<sup>5</sup> The Council Bluffs banking and real estate firm of Baldwin and Dodge likewise was seriously hurt by the collapse

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<sup>1</sup> Harper's Weekly, October 10, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1969), pp. 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. <sup>4</sup> D. C. Bloomer, "Commonplace Book."

<sup>5</sup> D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the Early History of Pottawattamie County, Annals of Iowa, First Series, X (July, 1872), 185-186.

of banks and decline in land values. Town lots depreciated in value; prices fell lower and lower. Lots in Council Bluffs selling in 1856-7 for \$3000-\$4000 could hardly be sold for \$750-\$1000 in 1860.<sup>1</sup> Money became very scarce. Council Bluffs residents were literally without money for some time. People resorted to trade and barter and wore their old clothes. Merchants issued pieces of paste-board good for five, ten, and fifty cents in goods. Farmers went ragged and burned corn. This stringency continued until the Pike's Peak excitement of the late fifties once more brought outfitters to Council Bluffs.<sup>2</sup>

By 1857 there were four banking firms in Council Bluffs.<sup>3</sup> All of these banks, except the Officer & Pusey firm, dealt extensively with Nebraska currency, which circulated locally in large quantities. Prior to 1855, the circulating medium throughout the Council Bluffs region had been confined primarily to gold or silver specie. Eagles and double eagles were abundant; bank bills were the exception rather than the rule.

The Iowa Constitution of 1846 prohibited banks from issuing paper money.<sup>4</sup> A number of Easterners and Iowans incorporated "wildcat" banks across the Missouri River in the Territory of Nebraska. The first of these banks, the Fire and Marine Insurance Company, was not incorporated as a bank but as the Western Exchange. The Iowa firm of Greene, Weare and Benton was instrumental in the incorporation of this company. Thomas

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. <sup>2</sup>H. H. Field, "Council Bluffs of the Past."

<sup>3</sup>Bloomer, op. cit. X (July, 1872), 185. Banking firms at Council Bluffs in 1857 included Officer & Pusey; Green, Weare, & Benton; Baldwin & Dodge; S. H. Riddell & Co.; and J. M. Palmer & Co.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth A. Callaher, "Money in Pioneer Iowa, 1838-1865," IJHP, XXXII (January, 1934), 20-21.

H. Benton, Jr. of Council Bluffs served as the president of this company, whose charter was construed to permit the issue of bank notes that circulated in Iowa and Nebraska.<sup>1</sup>

This paper money rapidly filled the vacuum caused by the drain of specie at Council Bluffs. The money went to St. Louis merchants to pay for the supplies sold by the Council Bluffs merchants to emigrants. During the late 50's the merchants were still dependent on St. Louis firms for their supplies.<sup>2</sup>

After the initial panic, Council Bluffs residents did not realize the full extent of the financial disaster of 1857. Emigrants were constantly moving across Iowa for the Far West. As an outfitting center, trade was active at Council Bluffs. Merchandise sold freely for cash, and the farmers found a good market for corn and wheat.<sup>3</sup>

The announcement in 1858 that gold had been discovered in the Colorado region vaguely known as Pike's Peak aroused once again the American gold fever.

The news of the discovery of gold in Cherry Creek near Pike's Peak was at once circulated by travelers and newspapers. The Iowa Weekly Citizen of Des Moines was one of the first newspapers to publicize the Cherry Creek discovery under the headline "Gold Discovered in Kansas." The newspaper reported that two men with "inferior implements washed our \$600 in one week. . ."<sup>4</sup> The Council Bluffs Nonpareil followed three days later using the following headline:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 27. <sup>2</sup> Field, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., X (July, 1872), 191-192.

<sup>4</sup> Des Moines Iowa Weekly Citizen, September 8, 1858. The eastern half of Colorado was part of Kansas Territory until 1861.

Pike's Peak Gold Diggins! Eureka! Eureka! Gold Mines  
Within 500 miles! The Best Route Thither! The Yellow  
Fever Spreading Rapidly! The Only Antidote--Pick and  
Shovel!!!<sup>1</sup>

It has been suggested that these newspapers exaggerated reports about the gold discoveries as "the Panic of 1857 was depressing business and a gold rush would restore prosperity to pioneer towns where miners bought supplies."<sup>2</sup>

Attempting to substantiate rumors about the gold rush, the Council Bluffs newspapers published accounts stating that the gold discovery had been officially confirmed by James W. Denver, Governor of the Kansas Territory, in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>3</sup> For the next several years much space in the Council Bluffs newspapers was devoted to articles on the new gold regions and the best routes to them. Council Bluffs, Nebraska City, and St. Joseph competed for the outfitting business. Each town's newspapers worked to convince the country that the best and most direct route to the gold fields lay through its limits. The Council Bluffs Nonpareil published an elaborate map of the road from Council Bluffs to the Cherry Creek gold mines.<sup>4</sup> The gold fever also affected Council Bluffs residents. Several, including the prominent Samuel Curtis, joined the throng headed for the gold fields. Curtis

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, September 11, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 619-620.

<sup>3</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, October 9, 1858.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I for an example of map.

served as a correspondent for the Nonpareil, which published his letters stating favorable conditions.<sup>1</sup>

However, by the spring of 1859, other letters were being received, reporting that the entire rush was a "humbug" and that it was ridiculous to believe that a fortune could be made quickly. The Burlington Hawkeye, published in a rival outfitting center, pronounced the whole story about the discovery of gold on Cherry Creek a wicked deception and fraud.<sup>2</sup> Disillusioned gold seekers who had "met somebody, who said that he met somebody else, who said that somebody else had gone to the mines and ascertained that there was no gold there. . . ." caused many to return. In April and May a regular stampede among emigrants commenced and hundreds of them recrossed the Missouri on their return. Some of these people were highly indignant at the merchants and newspapermen of Council Bluffs and rival towns, who, it was charged misled them into setting out on their vain search for gold. Threats of vengeance were sometimes heard, leading the press and businessmen to fear for their safety and property.<sup>3</sup> The Bugle attempted to learn the truth of the so-called gold discovery, but stated that no returnees had been as far as the mines. Its conclusion was given as follows:

We are fully persuaded that the return stampede, has been caused by speculation beyond Fort Kearney, those who have turned the Emigration back--bought their outfits for almost nothing and are making a big speculation out of their frauds, falsehoods and lying.

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., X (July, 1872), 192. Council Bluffs Nonpareil, September 18, October 16, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., X (July, 1872), 193-194.

<sup>3</sup> Nathan P. Dodge, "Early Emigration Through and to Council Bluffs," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, XVIII (January, 1932), 167-169.

Speculators upon the road turn back the Emigration within two hundred miles of the mines--buy their flour for \$2.50 per sack, and their bacon for two cents per pound, and send it forward to the Mines where they get \$15 per sack for the flour, and 70 cents per pound for the bacon; and a like profit on the balance of the outfit.

Emigrants are told all kinds of stories. Some say that the reports of the Mines are gotten up by persons in the frontier towns for the purpose of selling outfits . . . such assertions, as far as we are concerned, are unqualifiedly false. . .

Some say that favorable reports are put forth by persons interested in town lots and other speculations in the Gold Regions, for the purpose of drawing a crowd there.<sup>1</sup>

The reports in the newspapers became so conflicting that three eastern editors, Horace Greeley, Henry Villard, and Albert D. Richardson, went to the region to report the facts for their newspapers. On June 9, 1859, these three newspapermen signed a widely publicized statement from Gregory's Diggings which stated that while there was gold in this region, mining was a business that required "capital, experience, energy, endurance. . ." The report enumerated the successes of several individuals in that area and stated that many others had left too hastily.<sup>2</sup> The report, coming in the midst of the 1859 gold rush, may have discouraged some potential miners, but Council Bluffs witnessed hordes of hopeful '59ers.<sup>3</sup> Some 15,000 people passed through in 1859, many of whom probably bought provisions at Omaha.

The Council Bluffs press made further attempts to destroy the myth of the humbug by sending a correspondent to the Colorado gold fields to verify the findings. William H. Kinsman, a correspondent for the

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Bugle, May 18, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Des Moines Iowa Weekly Citizen, June 29, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> Council Bluffs Weekly Nonpareil, June 11, 1859.

Nonpareil, walked the entire distance from Council Bluffs to Cherry Creek. He reached the mining region in early June, and his first letters, containing the result of his observations, reached Council Bluffs in mid-summer. His reports were optimistic and produced further excitement in Council Bluffs and points east.<sup>1</sup> This proved to be another helpful tool used by the Council Bluffs press in its quest for attracting outfitting settlers. "Let the Hawkeye groan," was the expression used by the Council Bluffs press to counter the rival Burlington Hawkeye, which had previously pronounced the Cherry Creek discovery as a wicked deception and fraud.

Meanwhile, the discovery of gold near Pike's Peak brought a revival of trade at Council Bluffs. Outfitting for the emigrant again became its economic motive. As early as 1858, this movement toward Colorado had begun, and in January 1859, the first of the spring emigrants arrived from Wisconsin. In February a few companies, including one using "sheet-iron long tom"--a sleigh-like conveyance, began to strike the Old Mormon Trail for the gold fields. By March a "steady tide of hoofs and horns and covered wagons" was passing through the streets and leaving daily for Colorado. Every stage from the east brought passengers, and five or six steamers unloaded from fifty to seventy-five "Peakers" weekly. By April these numbers had grown to hundreds daily--most of them from the upper Mississippi Valley. To one prospector, Council Bluffs was "not a very inviting looking place it is situated between two bluffs one main street only and a very few good buildings. Streets and ravines crowded

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<sup>1</sup>Bloomer, op. cit., X (April, 1872), 193-4.



with teams and emigrants."<sup>1</sup> While some camped nearby, quite a few companies disregarded the inclement weather and advice of "those who knew" and departed immediately.<sup>2</sup>

By the middle of June the rush was over. The effect of this banner year upon Council Bluffs was noteworthy. Several large hotels catered to the emigrants; outfitters increased in numbers, eleven advertising in one newspaper; a "horse-railroad" was organized to run the three miles from the city to the landing; and a pork packing plant was established.

The decade of the sixties brought another great westward movement. Farmers heading for the Far West were generally better equipped than the emigrants who had headed for Colorado. Nevertheless, Council Bluffs merchants did a brisk business, since their advertising was designed to create a felt-need for new products. Publicity agents promised the public an abundance of reasonably priced goods:

. . . articles can be purchased here cheaper than at any other town or city in Iowa. We have mills in the city that can manufacture from two to three hundred sacks of flour daily, and the mills in the county within four miles of the city can make as many more. There is an abundance of wheat to be manufactured--enough to supply all the wants of the country and emigration, and a large surplus for shipping.<sup>3</sup>

Publicity centered around the superiority of the North Platte Route, recommended as the "natural highway" to the mines. Other routes were ridiculed. Publicity agents claimed that only the unwise few would take the St. Joseph cut-off to the old California trail. Those estimated

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth F. Millsap, (ed.), "Romanzo Kingman's Pike Peak Journal, 1859," IJHP, XLVIII (January, 1950), 67-69.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Weekly Nonpareil, February 11, 1860, February 26, 1859.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Weekly Bugle, February 29, 1860.

25,000 people who had passed over the Mormon Trail previously could not be wrong. In 1860, according to emigrant guide books, the trail possessed a shorter route, abundant supplies of wood and water, a well-protected and settled route up to Ft. Kearny, and easily-crossed rivers.<sup>1</sup> A map of the region between the Missouri and the Rockies, which showed Council Bluffs closer to the mines than it actually was, ran for weeks in the Bugle. A detailed "Table of Distances" informed the emigrant of every station, ferry, and bridge, and of wood and water along the entire route.

Additional attention to the Council Bluffs area was provided by a travelling artist who gave an exhibition of his views of Council Bluffs, Omaha, the overland trail and the mines. This exhibit of 10,000 feet of canvas was shown in both towns and then taken east on a tour.<sup>2</sup>

With all these inducements, even more emigrants arrived. By April and May some fifty wagons were leaving for the prairies daily, and each week some 1,000 emigrants arrived by steamer, wagon, or stage.<sup>3</sup> The two steam ferries, each capable of carrying twelve teams per trip and making from twenty to thirty trips each day, were kept busy crossing the "Big Muddy!" Livestock in great droves accompanied many wagons bound for California, Oregon and the Rocky Mountain territory.

The emigrant of the 60's appeared different from his counterpart of the late 50's. He was, noted an observer, generally "of the wealthy class, and for sobriety, morality and general good behavior is not surpassed by the resident population. . . . Out of the vast crowd which

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Weekly Nonpareil, January 21, December 8, 1860.  
Council Bluffs Weekly Bugle, February 29, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Council Bluffs Weekly Nonpareil, February 18, 1860.

<sup>3</sup> Council Bluffs Weekly Bugle, April 18, May 9, 1860.

has passed through, we have not seen but one man who was any worse for liquor."<sup>1</sup>

To what extent Council Bluffs lured emigrants is difficult to determine. A local editor denied sending "runners" to the states to the east, as he alleged other outfitting towns did. It was claimed instead that the movement was allowed to take its natural course. There is probably much truth in that, for emigrants generally followed the most accessible routes. Statistics reported by the company owning the two steam ferry boats would indicate this. For the week ending April 24, 1860, 514 emigrants were counted. The total for the six weeks ending May 26 was 1,526 wagons and 4,602 men.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these incomplete figures, it is probable that Council Bluffs did get "four-fifths of all the emigration from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and States East and North of them. . ." totalling between 10,000 and 15,000. Seventy-nine steamer arrivals prior to August 1 and more than \$21,000 collected for freighting services indicated that business was good.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1861 proved to be a continuation of the trend of the previous year. Streets were jammed with wagons. Steamboat arrivals became too regular to be news. An increase in livestock was noted. Emigrants destined for the Far West, particularly California, appeared to dominate the crowd.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 9, 1860.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 9, August 8, 1860.

Tables of distances and the usual propaganda concerning the Mormon Trail were published. Numerous assertions that lower towns such as St. Joseph and Independence were falsifying the distance to Pike's Peak also appeared. With the exception of Kansas City, the lower towns recommended the general trail west of Ft. Kearney. Council Bluffs argued that it was closer than any other town except Omaha to the mining areas.

Despite the military demands of the Civil War in the eastern United States, the westward movement did not cease during the war years. Many emigrants searched for new economic opportunities. This meant more than gold or silver--climate, rich soil, or commercial possibilities in the new territory. The continued emigration through Council Bluffs in 1863 was partially attributed to the war's disruption, as well as the fear of the draft.<sup>1</sup> Bloomer, a resident, recalled that the emigrants passing through Council Bluffs in 1863 were "almost uniformly opposed to the prosecution of the war and to the policy of the government in putting down the rebellion."<sup>2</sup>

As was customary, the outfitting houses did a heavy business despite rumors circulated by eastern outfitting towns that prices were higher at Council Bluffs. One emigrant buying supplies at Council Bluffs recorded in his diary. "Council Bluffs is not a very large place, but is a very busy one. We are surprised at the amount of business done here and

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<sup>1</sup>Robert G. Athearn, "Across the Plains in 1863: The Diary of Peter Winne," *IJHP*, XLIX (July, 1951), 221 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Bloomer, *op. cit.*, XI (April, 1873), 424.

at Omaha."<sup>1</sup> Numerous emigrants were lured by the prosperity of an emigration market and settled in the Council Bluffs area.

The Panic of 1857, followed by a new surge of emigration, dissipated much of the railroad fever at Council Bluffs. The citizens responded quite enthusiastically to the possibility of financial gain through sales to the crowds of emigrants passing through. One event, however, helped to rekindle the interest in railroad construction--the visit of Abraham Lincoln to Council Bluffs in the summer of 1859. After a campaign trip to Kansas, Lincoln, accompanied by Secretary of State O. M. Hatch of Illinois, visited Council Bluffs. Several factors may have explained Lincoln's visit.<sup>2</sup> In 1859 there were two families at Council Bluffs, originally from Springfield, Illinois--the Puseys and the Officers--who had known Lincoln.

A second explanation involved real estate. Norman Judd, manager of Lincoln's debates with Douglas, had asked Lincoln for a loan of three thousand dollars, and as security, offered seventeen choice lots in Council Bluffs. Lincoln may have wanted to see this land before making the loan. Others have pointed to Lincoln's desire to study the railroad question in the area of western Iowa and eastern Nebraska since the area seemed basic to a proposed transcontinental route.<sup>3</sup> Grenville M. Dodge, a surveyor for the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, discussed this possible route with Lincoln. Dodge had surveyed extensively in

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<sup>1</sup>Athearn, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>"The Visit of Abraham Lincoln to Council Bluffs," Annals of Iowa Third Series, IV (July, 1900), 460-1.

<sup>3</sup>Glenn Chesney Quiett, They Built the West: An Epic of Rails and Cities (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), pp. 3-12.

the West, and Lincoln discussed with him locations for a railroad. Dodge recommended the 42d-parallel route because it was the most practical and economical. Furthermore, Council Bluffs was the logical starting place because of the railroads building from Chicago to that point.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Lincoln was further attracted to the 42d-parallel route by the fact that Judd already owned Council Bluffs real estate and was asking him for a loan of \$3,000 on it.<sup>2</sup>

The most significant aspect of Lincoln's trip to Council Bluffs was his unofficial designation of Council Bluffs as the terminus of a future transcontinental railroad.<sup>3</sup> Some of the citizens of Council Bluffs took Lincoln to a high bluff on the north edge of town. From this point he could see ten miles north, ten miles south, and five miles west across the Missouri River. "Not one, but many roads will some day center here," Lincoln observed.<sup>4</sup>

The increased emigration activity, coupled with Lincoln's visit, stimulated a renewed interest by Council Bluffs residents in the proposed railroad projects. Their interest became manifest in their boundless energy and propaganda battle waged during the mid-60's to make Council Bluffs the leading railroad center of the West.

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<sup>1</sup> Grenville M. Dodge, How We Built the Union Pacific Railway (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 47-49.

<sup>2</sup> Quiett, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Perkins, Trails, Rails, and War (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), pp. 46-50.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln. The Prairie Years, II (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1926), 200.

## CHAPTER 7

### "STAR OF THE NORTHWEST," 1863-1869

During the 1860's Council Bluffs asserted itself as a leading outfitting town and looked with scorn on its "paper town" rivals.<sup>1</sup> Emigrants no longer needed to be pampered and appealed to. Emigration during this period was largely composed of foreigners and farmers with families. Wagons were loaded with household items and furniture while farm machinery was attached to the back axle. Stovepipes often penetrated the canvas tops, and the smell of beefsteak at mealtime tantalized passers-by. Cows, calves, sheep, and barking dogs followed behind.<sup>2</sup>

"Streets full of wagons and emigrants. Never saw the like. Most all headed for Idaho," observed Bloomer in his diary.<sup>3</sup> Emigrants were able to buy complete outfits, ranging from wagons and oxen to frying pans. Once the emigrants left Council Bluffs, they experienced additional difficulty in traveling. One emigrant on his way to Idaho recalled these hardships:

. . . getting across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs to Omaha, the kinds and degree of discomfort were unspeakable. The river, itself turbid and sullen, well deserved--the name given it, the 'Big Muddy.' The ferry boat was flat, rude, unclean, more like a raft than a boat; the approach to it on the Iowa side was a steep bank of sticky, slippery, black mud, down which we all walked or slid--as best we could, our baggage and blankets being pushed or hurled after us in indiscriminate confusion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar O. Winther, The Transportation Frontier, Trans-Mississippi West, 1865-1890 (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>Bloomer Diary, April 25, 1864.

<sup>4</sup>Nathan P. Dodge, "Early Emigration Through and to Council Bluffs," Annals of Iowa, Third Series, XVIII (January, 1932), 175-6.

Newspaper coverage of emigration was overshadowed by news of railroad advancements and celebrations. Emigrant guidebooks published for that purpose, boasted of Council Bluffs' assets:

Council Bluffs . . . does as much business as any city on the eastern border of the state containing three times the number of inhabitants. Its business houses, though not so numerous as in some of the cities on the Mississippi River, are much more extensive and each one does as much business as three or four of the Mississippi River houses. The trade is principally with freighters and merchants, who trade with, and do business in the mining country west of us, and when one of our heavy houses fails to make sales of a thousand or more dollars a day, the proprietors begin to look blue and say, 'Times are dull--nothing doing.'<sup>1</sup>

Council Bluffs boasted about its business transactions: "The aggregate amount of business transacted at Council Bluffs during the year 1866 is estimated at \$3 million."

In addition to outfitting the overland emigrants, Council Bluffs residents worked for a higher goal: to become the leading railroad center of the Northwest,<sup>2</sup> serving the needs of larger groups of emigrants moved by trains to areas west.

Residents launched an impressive propaganda campaign, hoping to attract various railroads to the city. The campaign was led by the two newspapers--The Bugle and The Chronotype, papers of different political persuasions that nevertheless agreed on the benefits of railway expansion to Council Bluffs. The press capitalized on Council Bluffs' reputation as an outfitting center and suggested that railroads be constructed along this "natural highway" to the west.

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<sup>1</sup>W. S. Burke, An Outline History of Council Bluffs and its Railroads (Chicago: Horton & Leonard, 1867).

<sup>2</sup>Levi O. Leonard and Jack T. Johnson, A Railroad to the Sea (Iowa City: Midland House, 1939), pp. 83-4.



As inducements to railway companies, local residents voted bonds, donated land and money, and actually provided free labor to speed the completion of the various lines into their city. The combination of propaganda and financial inducements prevented rival towns from gaining importance as railroad centers. Celebrations and land breaking ceremonies instilled a high level of interest among the townspeople and served as springboards for propaganda. Newspapers published these accounts, attempting to attract the attention of Eastern financiers, new residents, and employees.

With all the talk about railroads, Council Bluffs lacked railroad connections until 1867. Before then it relied on the traditional means of communication--stages, steamboats, and hacks.<sup>1</sup>

When Asa Whitney, New York businessman and Oriental trader, petitioned Congress in 1845 to construct a transcontinental railroad, the idea provoked much discussion. Whitney proposed that Congress grant a sixty-mile strip between Lake Superior and Oregon to any company willing to build. Expansionist movements of the forties and fifties, the Mexican War, the discovery of gold in California and Colorado, all contributed to a favorable governmental response.

Among the problems faced by promoters of the transcontinental railroad were the method of financing and selection of a route. Some advocated financing the railroad by private means; others recommended a minimum of government assistance. When the magnitude of the project was realized, railroad promoters became convinced that government aid would be an absolute necessity.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

Sectional considerations influenced the debate over the route. Southerners clamored for a route favoring their interests--a line either along the Butterfield Overland mail route or one following the Canadian or Red Rivers. Northerners favored a route through South Pass. They pointed to the commercial importance of Chicago, and the influx of population into Minnesota and surrounding territory, making a northern route more desirable.<sup>1</sup>

By 1860, public support for a Pacific railroad was sufficient to warrant a railroad plank in the Republican platform declaring "that the Federal Government ought to render immediate and efficient aid in its construction."<sup>2</sup>

It was not until the Southerners left Congress that action on a railroad bill was possible. In the face of an actual war situation, it was theorized that a railroad was a military necessity. Besides, with the large war expenditures, the cost of financing a railroad seemed minimal.<sup>3</sup>

In 1858, Congress had authorized a committee to study the feasibility of a Pacific railroad. Upon the committee's recommendations, the second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress took action on a Pacific railroad bill.<sup>4</sup> President Lincoln's personal support of the Union Pacific Railroad bill was based on his view that the railroad was a military necessity

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 45, 59-60.

<sup>2</sup>Jack T. Johnson, Peter Anthony Dey (Iowa City: State Historical Society, 1939), pp. 83-4.

<sup>3</sup>Leonard and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 64-5.

<sup>4</sup>Johnson, op. cit.

and was essential to keep the Pacific Coast (California) in the Union. The measure finally sent to the President was a compromise because it attempted to satisfy the various special-interest groups and the demands of a growing railroad lobby.

The act stipulated that the government form a Union Pacific Corporation which would be given ten sections of land and receive a grant of \$16,000 for every mile of track it laid. This subsidy was increased to \$32,000 and \$48,000 per mile for foothills and mountains, respectively. The Union Pacific Company was required to raise sufficient capital to build the first forty miles, after which the subsidy would start.<sup>1</sup> The specific location of the line was to be decided by competent engineers when the route was defined in general terms. The President was expected to fix the eastern terminus. Before fixing the eastern terminus, Lincoln, recalling his interview with Grenville Dodge at Council Bluffs in 1859, summoned him to Washington for a conference. After carefully studying a report made by engineer Peter A. Dey of possible routes west of the Missouri River, Lincoln asked Dodge, who had conducted similar surveys, to help him make a decision. Dodge recorded that "after his interview with me, in which he showed perfect knowledge of the question, and satisfying himself as to the engineering questions that had been raised, I was satisfied he would locate the terminus at or near Council Bluffs."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Monaghan, The Overland Trail (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1947), pp. 393-4. James McCague, Moguls and Iron Men (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 31-33.

<sup>2</sup> Grenville M. Dodge, How We Built the Union Pacific Railway (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 57. McCague, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

Other factors influencing Lincoln's decision are obscure. Lincoln may have been influenced by his friend, Norman B. Judd, who had nominated him for President at the Republican convention in Chicago. Judd owned real estate in Omaha which he hoped to develop. In addition, Lincoln owned sixteen lots of land at Council Bluffs, and a railroad terminus in the vicinity would enhance the value of his property.<sup>1</sup> Lincoln issued his first order on November 17, 1863:

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby fix so much of the western boundary of the State of Iowa as lies between the north and south boundaries of the United States township within which the city of Omaha is situated as the point from which the line of railroad<sup>2</sup> and telegraph in that section mentioned shall be constructed.

What point specifically did the President have in mind? In his proclamation he may have meant to designate Council Bluffs as the eastern terminus, however, his description was too vague to determine his intentions. The managers of the Union Pacific favored Omaha and began utilizing the area for supply depots for the construction crews and the engineering corps. One historian suggested that "even in its youth, Omaha was a real center of transportation."<sup>3</sup>

After the celebration marking the beginning of construction, Union Pacific officials asked Lincoln for a new order since the first order was not specific enough. Lincoln complied with the request and issued the second executive order on March 7, 1864.

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 76-8.

<sup>2</sup> Dodge, op. cit., p. 51. <sup>3</sup> Johnson, op. cit., p. 107.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do, upon the application of said company, designate and establish such first-named point on the eastern boundary of the State of Iowa east of and opposite to the east line of section 10, in township 15 south, of range 13 east,<sup>1</sup> of the sixty principal meridian in the Territory of Nebraska.

Although the second executive order designated the geographic location where the Union Pacific was to begin, it still did not clarify the location. Omaha's claim to the eastern terminus was backed by Union Pacific officials while Council Bluffs residents believed that both executive orders referred to its town without specifically naming it. Besides, wasn't one of their own residents, Grenville Dodge, waging a battle on their behalf? Council Bluffs residents were assured that their city would be the "Star of the Northwest," as its leaders had predicted before the Panic of 1857.

Prior to the Civil War, residents became suspicious of railroads. This suspicion stemmed from their fiasco with the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. After the company's organization in December of 1852, promoters had solicited citizens for "local aid." Three hundred thousand dollars had been pledged in bonds to the M & M Company.<sup>2</sup> In return, the M & M had agreed to build east from Council Bluffs, but only four miles were graded at a cost of \$4,000. Soon after, the operations were suspended, and the remaining \$296,000 was never accounted for. Grenville Dodge, who had assisted in the survey and the promotion of the route to Council Bluffs, dispensed with the irregularity this way: "And then we were called east to continue the road from Iowa City west."<sup>3</sup> The panic of 1857 had suspended all operations.

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<sup>1</sup>Dodge, op. cit., p. 51. <sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, July 19, 1866.

<sup>3</sup>Dodge, op. cit., p. 51.

In the 1860's when residents realized the financial and commercial benefits from railway ties between their city and St. Louis and Chicago, there was a renewed interest in railroads. With the assurance that a transcontinental railroad was to be constructed west from the Missouri River, Eastern railroads competed to link their lines to this trunk line. Council Bluffs, strategically located in this respect, plunged into an exhausting campaign to attract eastern railroads.

The desire for a year-round supply route between St. Louis and Council Bluffs, coupled with speculative reports of financial gains in railroad investment, prompted a railroad convention. On May 19, 1858, a convention was held at Council Bluffs to promote the construction of a railroad from Council Bluffs to St. Joseph, Missouri. Four Iowa counties, two Nebraska counties, and three Missouri counties were represented. At this convention delegates from the counties were elected to construct the road.<sup>1</sup> Since this was largely a local effort, financing of the project depended upon local aid. Residents of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County voted bonds and gave the title to a right of way through the county. The company's charter, granted by the State of Iowa in July, 1858, authorized the company to build "from Council Bluffs to some point on the Missouri State line to connect with a railroad from St. Joseph to said line." War abruptly halted building plans.<sup>2</sup>

At a railroad convention in St. Louis in 1865, the directors of the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railroad engaged a noted engineer, Willis

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<sup>1</sup> D. C. Bloomer, "Notes on the Early History of Pottawattamie County," Annals of Iowa, First Series, X (July, 1872), 188-9.

<sup>2</sup> Genevieve Powlinson Mauck, "The Council Bluffs Story," The Palimpsest, XLII (September, 1961), 416-417.

Phelps of Massachusetts, to complete their line. In order to obtain Phelps, the directors practically made him the proprietor of the road.<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs residents responded positively. The Bugle noted the effects of railroad construction in their city.

The fact that the building of the road has been let has its influence here and we notice that several sales of real estate to Eastern men have taken place within the last few days, and real estate property is rapidly advancing in price.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1866, the directors of the railroad predicted that cars would begin running to Pacific City, Mills County by July, and that the entire road would be completed by September. The early completion depended in part on the availability of the necessary timber for ties and bridges. The editor of the Bugle assisted the work of Willis Phelps:

Citizens along the line should be liberal towards the contractor in furnishing ties and other timber. They should bear in mind that the high price paid for ties by the Pacific Railroad Company, will not and cannot be paid by the contractor on this road. . . . We understand that Mr. Phelps is paying from forty-five to fifty-five cents for ties. If he cannot get them at that, he will get out his<sub>3</sub> own ties and timber if citizens do not deal liberally with him.

Residents proved to be generous and accommodating. The money required for construction--the cost of labor, provisions, and materials--had been raised within Pottawattamie County. From fifty to a hundred teams owned by people in and around Council Bluffs assisted in hauling iron to complete the road. Neighboring residents of Mills and Fremont counties, outside the mainstream of overland travel, were not as helpful.

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<sup>1</sup>E. Douglas Branch, "Council Bluffs Railroads," The Palimpsest, X (June, 1929), 206-208.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, October 26, 1862. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., December 7, 1865.

Despite Phelps's predictions, there was still no locomotive in Council Bluffs or Western Iowa by August, 1866. A new promise was made stating that Council Bluffs would be linked to St. Louis, via the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railway by the first of June, 1867. The editor of the Nonpareil was jubilant.

Dinna ye hear the whistle blow?

The advance guard of the Council Bluffs and St. Joe Road is only three and a half miles from town. . . . This road had been pushing ahead quietly but steadily till it is right among us before we are hardly able to realize it. When the track is laid to the depot in this city, the road will be done to the State line. Can't we get some kind of demonstration next week to celebrate the coming of the first train into Council Bluffs? Let us at least have a general coming together of the people to welcome the Iron Horse. This is an event we have labored and waited and prayed for, these many years, and it should not be permitted now to pass by in silence.<sup>1</sup>

Floods and high water during the spring and summer, the slow movement of iron and other supplies from the east, and limited capital all contributed to another delay.

On January 9, 1867, the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railroad was formally opened to Bartlett, Fremont County, about twenty-five miles south of Council Bluffs.

A number ladies and gentlemen of Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie county had the pleasure of taking a car ride from our city for the first time in the history of her life. The day was so cold, but the event was one of so much importance to our country, and the car so comfortable as to overshadow all else, and<sup>2</sup> to cheer up our hearts, and turn the occasion into a jubilee.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, December 13, 20, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., August 8, 1867.



During the summer the editor of the Bugle again traveled to Bartlett.

It will pay any man who is housed up during the busy months, to take a trip over this road, and look at the vast fields of beautiful, luxuriant corn, wheat and oats. The Missouri Valley between here and Bartlett is wonderfully rich, and is now growing, as it were, under vast loads of grain. Here you can look upon acres of as good corn as ever was grown. It waves like magic rods, and may produce magic results when ripened and gathered for the market.<sup>1</sup>

With the completion of the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railway on August 18, 1868, Council Bluffs was finally linked to St. Louis warehouses on a year-round basis.

Merchants in Western Iowa hoped to stimulate competition between merchants in St. Louis and Chicago.<sup>2</sup> Farmers in Western Iowa also anticipated increased prices for their agricultural products through competitive bidding between the two cities.

At the same time, Eastern railroad companies were encouraged to build west quickly to cash in on supplying the Council Bluffs merchants. St. Louis firms were advised to support the construction of rails between that city and Council Bluffs in order to keep its Council Bluffs customers.<sup>3</sup> Eastern railroads did not need such an invitation, since Council Bluffs was the logical place to link to the Union Pacific Railroad.

Out of a series of mergers, recharters, and consolidations, the Chicago and North Western Railway emerged in June, 1864. Its predecessor, the Lyons and Iowa Central Railway, had disappeared after the panic of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., August 8, 1867.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., July 6, 13, 1865.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., July 6, 13, 1865, October 31, 1867.

1857. In July, 1864, the Chicago and North Western was authorized to build from Boone to the Missouri River.<sup>1</sup> The directors of this line probably planned to build to Council Bluffs from the beginning, but wanted to obtain favors, so they remained coy. The Council Bluffs press suggested Pottawattamie county to offer inducements.

It is yet an unsettled question, whether this road will come down the Boyer to Council Bluffs, or cross the river at De Soto, but we have reason to believe, from what we have seen and heard of the feelings of the company, that if a reasonable inducement is offered by Pottawattamie County the road will make its connection with the Union Pacific at Council Bluffs. This road will reach the Missouri several years in advance of any other coming across Iowa, and that town upon the river which secures the advantage of its terminus, will derive an impetus therefrom with which rival points will find it difficult to compete.<sup>2</sup>

Grenville Dodge, chief engineer of the Union Pacific, and Thomas C. Durant, vice president of the Union Pacific, used their influence to have the Chicago and North Western build to Council Bluffs. These Union Pacific officials wanted a speedy completion for a year-round supply route so supplies need not be shipped to Omaha via the Missouri River, which was frozen four months of the year. Railroad equipment from Chicago and other eastern points could be shipped to Omaha any time by rail.<sup>3</sup>

Officials of the Chicago and North Western came to Council Bluffs on July 9, 1866 to make a definite proposition. If thirty thousand dollars and the right of way through the county were donated, the

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<sup>1</sup>Branch, op. cit., pp. 213-215.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Nonpareil, September 21, 28, 1865.

<sup>3</sup>Stanley P. Hirshson, Grenville M. Dodge (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 158.

railway would guarantee to build to Council Bluffs. A meeting was called on July 9, 1866 to consider the proposition. Stages had been erected at either end of Burhop's Hall, one for the band and the other for the guest speakers. Railroad officials, John I. Blair and W. W. Walker, and prominent Council Bluffs citizens were featured speakers.<sup>1</sup> Numerous resolutions were adopted by the citizens. The final one was:

Resolved, that we feel under obligations to Messers. Blair and Walker, the gentlemanly officers of the said company, for their visit to our place, and for the interest manifested by them in the early completion of their road to our city, and for the free, full and frank expressions given them of the prospects for the speedy completion of their road, and of the future prospects of our city.<sup>2</sup>

Marshall Turley headed the list of subscriptions with his donation of eighty acres of land for a depot and other railroad buildings. Thirty thousand dollars were donated by various firms: one business firm donated two thousand dollars; eleven subscribers pledged a thousand each; other contributors pledged one hundred dollars.<sup>3</sup> The enthusiasm of the gathering was echoed by the Nonpareil.

It would be better for every lot owner in the city to donate one half of his possessions--be they (large) or little--if, thereby, these railroad connections could be secured, than to own twice what he now has and allow them to go elsewhere. Without her railroad, we would scarcely give a baubee for the top vacant lot in Council Bluffs; with them we will see how rapidly impulse will be stirred into life, and the flush of a radiant but permanent prosperity mantle all the future.<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting on this meeting, D. C. Bloomer concluded that the large donation was unnecessary since the railroad directors had always intended to build to Council Bluffs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Bugle, July 19, 1866. <sup>2</sup> Ibid. <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, July 9, 1866.

<sup>5</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., XI (April, 1873), 441.

Several weeks after the meeting, the Chicago and North Western advertised in the Chicago Times for 5,000 workers to help complete the line to Council Bluffs. The Chicago Tribune predicted that by June 1, 1867, the Tribune would be placed on every breakfast table in Council Bluffs and Omaha on the morning after publication.<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1867, townspeople witnessed ground breaking ceremonies for the depot. Speeches and a brass band made up the ceremony. A similar ceremony on January 22, 1867, marked the completion of the line to Council Bluffs. Congratulatory telegrams were read and the director and superintendents of the construction company were honored. Grenville M. Dodge delivered the main address:

Citizens of Council Bluffs: We have met here today to celebrate the completion of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad to Council Bluffs--thus linking the last connections and closing the last link that gives us the only all rail route from the Missouri River to the Atlantic coast. . . . Nature has been lavish in concentrating here in this valley and around this city advantages for a commercial and railroad centre possessed by no other point between St. Louis and the head of the Missouri River. If we but will it and use the ability, energy, enterprise, and capital we have among us, we can within the next two years--if financial matters pursued prosperous, and no great revolution overtakes our country--concentrate here five great trunk railroads, that shall bring to and through us the trade and traffic of the North, East, West, and South. I therefore appeal to you, today, to awake from this sleep that has possessed us, and each one and all of us determine from this day henceforth to place our shoulders to the wheel, and use all our ability, capital, and enterprise in building up here a city and a railroad centre, that shall be second to none in the State of Iowa, and which shall be the metropolis of the Missouri Valley. To do this, we must extend the right hand of fellowship to labor, commerce, capital, manufacturers, and to men of all trades of all nations . . . and make it of interest to them<sup>2</sup> to seek here a home, a fortune, and hereafter be one of us.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank P. Donovan, "The North Western in Iowa," The Palimpsest, XLIII (December, 1962), 552-5.

<sup>2</sup> Council Bluffs Nonpareil, January 22, 1867.

The Chicago & Rock Island Railroad also began building towards Council Bluffs during the 1860's. It was the parent company of The Mississippi & Missouri Railroad which had been built from Davenport to Iowa City and surveyed to Council Bluffs by January 1856. Its construction had been halted by the Civil War. In December, 1865, the M & M was sold to the Chicago and Rock Island Company. Since Council Bluffs residents had lost their investment in the M & M, the Nonpareil exulted, "There will be a rattling among the dry bones on this line of the M & M." The editor predicted that another railroad would soon be built to its city.

The object of the C & R. I. Company in making the purchases, is to push the road through at the earliest moment to secure a connection at Council Bluffs with the Pacific Road, and our readers may rest assured this will be done, for the company has the money, and their every interest is at stake in having this connection made without delay.<sup>1</sup>

The Rock Island, headed for the Missouri, competed with the Chicago and North Western. In the fall of 1867, construction was booming. Some seventeen hundred men were working, and the company was advertising for three thousand more. The editor of the Bugle was elated at the prospect of the Rock Island building to Council Bluffs.

We have so much, whistling now, from the locomotives of the Union Pacific, Chicago and Northwestern, Council Bluffs and Sioux City, and the Council Bluffs and St. Joe Railroads that when the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railroad gets here,<sup>2</sup> we will hardly discover the accession to the whistling.

John F. Tracy, president of the Rock Island, used every opportunity to popularize the road. For instance, the editor of the Bugle was invited

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<sup>1</sup>Council Bluffs Nonpareil, December 7, 14, 1865.

<sup>2</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, December 19, 1867.

to ride on the Rock Island special between Des Moines and Marengo, ninety-two miles east. The editor boasted about the comfort on the Rock Island.

This road is one of the best, if not the best in Iowa. It is as smooth and level as a 'house floor,' and being constructed with continuous rail, a rather rail bolted together, that eternal click and jerk heard and felt on roads constructed with rail connected by 'chains,' is not experienced upon it.<sup>1</sup>

On May 12, 1869, the first train of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific entered Council Bluffs. Cheering residents were awed when the Rock Island's sensational "silver" (reportedly nickel-plated) locomotive arrived from the East. This locomotive had been purchased in Paris where it had been the toast of the 1867 Exposition.<sup>2</sup> The fire company, ladies' societies, brass band and artillery squad participated in the celebration. Part of the celebration included laying the cornerstone of the Ogden Hotel. This hotel, famous for its luxury, was named for William B. Ogden, a Chicago railroad financier.<sup>3</sup> The mood of celebration was echoed by the press:

East, West, North, and South, the iron tracks are laid, and the iron horse drags his long train of cars, loaded with passengers, freight, and live stock, to and from our city in every direction. But this is not all, added to this we have the great Missouri river--a natural highway--upon whose turbid waters float one hundred streamers loaded with commercial traffic. Let us be proud, we have a right to be. Let us rejoice, for this respect we have great cause for rejoicing.<sup>4</sup>

During the first few months of through service to Council Bluffs, the Rock Island won the approval of the travelling and shipping public for its fast schedules and comfort. The "fast Pacific express" made the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., April 16, 1868. <sup>2</sup> Mauck, op. cit., p. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., XI (October, 1873), 624.

<sup>4</sup> Council Bluffs Bugle, May 1869. Council Bluffs, Nonpareil, May 1869.

run from Chicago to Council Bluffs in eighteen hours and averaged 27½ miles per hour.<sup>1</sup>

The Burlington and Missouri was the third railroad arriving at Council Bluffs from the East. In the fall of 1868 its President, James F. Joy, proposed Council Bluffs for its terminus, if the citizens would donate twenty acres of ground for a depot. With construction seventy-five miles away, newspapers asserted in the summer of 1869 that the rails of another railroad would soon lead into Council Bluffs. President Joy had become a heavy stockholder in the line between Council Bluffs and St. Joseph; and the Burlington and Missouri formed a junction with that line at Pacific Junction, running into Council Bluffs upon the same track. One December 4, 1869, the first Burlington train entered the city.<sup>2</sup>

After the Union Pacific had been released from its obligation to construct a branch to Sioux City, the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad Company was organized in August 1864 and began laying track at California Junction.<sup>3</sup> By the beginning of 1868 the line was completed into Sioux City. From California Junction the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad was connected to Council Bluffs by the Chicago and North Western, which later acquired a majority of stock of the Sioux City and Pacific Company.<sup>4</sup>

As Council Bluffs became linked by railroads from all directions, the town made a resume of its assets. The population of Pottawattamie

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<sup>1</sup> Council Bluffs Bugle, June 17, 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Bloomer, op. cit., XII (January, 1874), 36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.    <sup>4</sup> Ibid.

County, composed mostly of Council Bluffs residents, had swelled from 5,012 in 1859 to 16,893 in 1869.<sup>1</sup> The population of Council Bluffs was listed in 1870 as 10,020.<sup>2</sup> Two large pork packing plants had been built. A new courthouse had been erected, and business houses were "numbered by the hundreds."

With the railroads in its city, Council Bluffs thought it had fought a valiant fight and won. The Union Pacific was running three freight trains and one express daily. Two trains passed daily over the tracks of the Rock Island, the North Western, the St. Joseph and the Sioux City line. Announcements of future railroads building to Council Bluffs pleased the populace.

Now, the election is past, Council Bluffs has been elected to the highest position that can be given to any city on the upper Missouri River. There is no necessity now for talking and writing about Council Bluffs as we talked and wrote twelve years ago. The clouds that then overhung our destiny have been removed, and the sun of the city's glory is shining fully upon us and all we have to do is to direct its rays to our advantage and future greatness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Iowa State Census, 1859, 1869.

<sup>2</sup>Bloemer, op. cit., XII (January, 1874), 49.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Bugle, January, 1870.



## CHAPTER 8

### COUNCIL BLUFFS WINS BUT OMAHA TAKES THE PRIZE

With the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad to Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869, several important matters remained to be settled at the eastern end: one was the question of the eastern terminus. Another involved construction of a bridge across the Missouri River.

To join the Union Pacific to the eastern railroads it was necessary to bridge the Missouri River. The Union Pacific Company authorized the construction of this bridge in 1868 at a cost of \$850,000. As part of the proposed plan, Omaha and Council Bluffs were required to give land and issue \$250,000 and \$200,000 in bonds respectively. These bonds were overwhelmingly approved by both towns in the summer of 1868.<sup>1</sup> With the expectation of making financial gains, Grenville Dodge, Caleb Baldwin and John Baldwin bought land near the proposed bridge.<sup>2</sup> However, due to heavy spending on railroad construction, the Union Pacific suspended the Missouri bridge construction. As a result, Dodge and the Baldwins held large areas of relatively worthless land.<sup>3</sup>

As chief engineer for the Union Pacific and a member of the company's bridge committee, Dodge was knowledgeable on the bridge question. Dodge and the Baldwins, James F. Wilson, Thomas Officer and William Pusey formed a company to build a toll bridge. Dodge, using his influence as a member of the bridge committee, induced the Union Pacific to transfer

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley P. Hirshson, Grenville M. Dodge (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 163, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

its rights to the newly formed company. In addition, they secured the promise of the eastern lines to use the completed toll bridge. Dodge bought an additional 1,000 acres of land in Council Bluffs for the Union Pacific terminus.<sup>1</sup> "I was very anxious the bridge should be built to utilize the thousand acres of land I had bought for our terminals in Iowa and to fix permanently and practically the terminus in Iowa," Dodge recorded in his autobiography.<sup>2</sup>

Before construction could begin, Dodge's Missouri River Railroad and Bridge Company needed congressional approval. On June 24, 1870, a protest meeting was held on the streets of Council Bluffs, to argue against the proposed scheme. William Sapp, representing Council Bluffs businessmen, argued that congressional approval of the project would force them to pay continuously a sum of money to the owners of the toll bridge. William Pusey and one of the Baldwin brothers defended the project. Grenville Dodge stammered through an "emotional and often illogical speech." He swore that he loved Council Bluffs and would not penalize his neighbors across the river. Although he spoke of honor and motives, the protestors were unconvinced. They elected Sapp to represent their views in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

Through Sapp's lobbying, the Palmer Bill, giving authority and monetary aid to the Missouri River Railroad and Bridge Company, was defeated. As a result, the project was temporarily shelved.<sup>4</sup> Later the Union

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<sup>1</sup>Iowa State Register, June 5, 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Grenville M. Dodge, How We Built the Union Pacific Railway (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Council Bluffs Evening Bugle, June 23, 24, 1870. Dodge op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>Dodge, Ibid.

Pacific Company secured the necessary legislation and completed the bridge on March 22, 1872.<sup>1</sup>

This struggle presaged another problem: Was Omaha or Council Bluffs the designated eastern terminus of the road? Due to the vagueness of President Lincoln's proclamations of November 17, 1863 and March 7, 1864, both towns declared themselves to be the legal terminus. The Union Pacific chose Omaha.<sup>2</sup> This choice was challenged by Grenville Dodge, who was eager to develop his 1,000 acres of land. He chided the company for disregarding Lincoln's orders to station the terminus in Council Bluffs. The Union Pacific, having established shops and offices in Omaha, ignored Dodge's request. The company commissioned lawyers to prove that Omaha was and always had been the eastern terminus.<sup>3</sup>

Angered because of the expense and inconvenience involved in picking up and delivering freight from Omaha, Council Bluffs merchants decided to take legal action. The test case was brought to court by the Hall and Morse grocery firm. In the suit that followed, Lincoln's name and his executive orders were invoked by both sides.<sup>4</sup> Dodge, Lincoln's advisor to the selection, was appointed as an investigator. Dodge ruled in favor of Council Bluffs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Levi O. Leonard and Jack T. Johnson, A Railroad to the Sea (Iowa City: Midland House, 1939), pp. 261-4.

<sup>2</sup> J. R. Perkins, Trails, Rails and War (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 287. <sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 287-92.

<sup>5</sup> Leonard and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 261-4.

The case was carried to the Supreme Court in 1875. Upholding the decision of the Circuit Court, Justice William Strong ruled that the Pacific Railway Act of 1862 and Lincoln's proclamations had clearly designated Council Bluffs as the terminus.<sup>1</sup> The Union Pacific officials had used the phrases "eastern terminus" and "initial point" interchangeably; but Lincoln and others had used them separately. Complying with the court's order, a Union Pacific terminus was constructed at Council Bluffs.<sup>2</sup>

Grenville Dodge was severely criticized by opponents and Union Pacific colleagues for his role in the bridge and terminus questions. They charged that Dodge was motivated by personal financial gain. If that was his motive, Dodge failed. There was little or no change in real estate value as a result of the terminus because the Union Pacific Company merely obeyed the letter of the law. They constructed a nominal terminus at Council Bluffs but continued the bulk of their business at Omaha.<sup>3</sup>

None of the financial dreams came true for the man who believed that the flood-plain of the Missouri River west of the town of Council Bluffs would become the greatest industrial center on the Middle West; but greater dreams came true<sup>4</sup> for the whole country, and by these it must be measured.

With the rise of Omaha in 1854, Council Bluffs had combined with its neighbor to promote railroad construction to the Missouri River. Billing themselves as the "twin cities of the Missouri," they competed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. <sup>2</sup>Perkins, op. cit., pp. 292-3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

successfully with Bellevue, Nebraska, Sioux City, Iowa, and others. This collaboration, explained in Campbell's Emigrant Guide, continued until 1863:

Stretch out your arm. Spread thumb and fingers as widely as possible. . . . The five fingers and thumb are the railroads centering to united in the palm, which is Council Bluffs, and the wrist which is Omaha. <sup>1</sup> . . the arm represents the Union Pacific Railroad.

Prior to 1863 Omaha had been a struggling village. However, after the passage of the Union Pacific Railroad Act it changed into an industrial town with the one hundred million dollar business of the Union Pacific.<sup>2</sup> "Omaha City . . . outdid most of its rivals in self-promotion," aiming to becoming the dominant railroad center of the Northwest.<sup>3</sup> Railroad contracts brought in iron men from Pennsylvania, wool and cotton men from Massachusetts, bankers from Philadelphia, nail manufacturers, boot and shoemen, all eager to serve the needs of railroad officials and crews. Locomotives and other machine parts were brought up the Missouri River or hauled across Iowa and assembled in shops at Omaha.<sup>4</sup> The effect on Omaha was significant:

Since Omaha was the supply-center for all the railroad operations to the west, the Union Pacific built immense car-and-engine-houses and machine shops, and by 1866 five or six hundred substantial buildings had been erected, one brick block costing \$100,000. Business was rushing: one grocery house had sales of \$500,000 a year, and the pioneer

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell's Western Guide (Chicago: John R. Walsh, 1866).

<sup>2</sup> George R. Leighton, Five Cities (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936), p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar O. Winther, The Transportation Frontier, Trans-Mississippi West, 1865-1890 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Leighton, op. cit., p. 154.

merchants were making fortunes. The railroad spent a quarter of a million dollars a month in Omaha, and business lots sold for as much as \$5,000.<sup>1</sup>

Omaha's economy depended upon the railroad. Merchants and businessmen prospered from contracts of all sorts. Shops were constructed for the railroads; newspapers published with its money; restaurants, bars, and places of prostitution catered to the Union Pacific workers. When one Union Pacific lobbyist was asked, "How much of Nebraska's greatness do you attribute to the Union Pacific?" He replied, "I might say all of it."<sup>2</sup>

Omaha grew rapidly during the 1860's. Its population swelled from 10,883 in 1860, composed of 1,883 permanent residents and the remainder transients, to 16,083 in 1860, composed of 6,320 foreigners and 9,763 native born.<sup>3</sup> Recording comparisons between Omaha and Council Bluffs, D. C. Bloomer reported in 1865, "Several fine buildings constructed and more in progress, Omaha is decidedly ahead of the Bluffs just now."<sup>4</sup> Again the following year Bloomer regretted the lack of civic pride of Council Bluff's residents.

Beginning to think Omaha has got so much the start on Council Bluffs that't must take the lead permanently. Building has gone forward there this year with wonderful spirit while but little has been done here.<sup>5</sup>

There were signs of population growth and increased business activity. During the 1860's the increase was overshadowed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn C. Quiett, They Built the West (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Leighton, op. cit., pp. 156-7.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard and Johnson, op. cit., pp. 82, 87.

<sup>4</sup> D. C. Bloomer Diary, November 29, 1865. <sup>5</sup> Ibid., October 25, 1866.

phenomenal growth occuring across the river. Council Bluffs' population increased from 3,000 in 1860, to 4,000 by 1865. By 1869 it had reached 7,000.<sup>1</sup> This marked a significant increase in population, but Omaha grew faster.

It was clear that the Union Pacific had its offices and interests centered in Omaha while Council Bluffs had only reaped the benefit of a terminal.<sup>2</sup> Council Bluffs residents had worked vigorously to promote their city as a railroad center with the hope that it would be "destined to be, in ten years from now, such a city as Chicago is today."<sup>3</sup> Ironically Council Bluffs was designated as the eastern terminus but the city had lost to Omaha in terms of volume of business and population.

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<sup>1</sup>The Census of Iowa, 1859, 1867, 1869.

<sup>2</sup>Dodge, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>W. S. Burke, Directory of the City of Council Bluffs and Emigrants' Guide to the Gold Regions of the West (Council Bluffs: Nonpareil Printing Company, 1866).

## CHAPTER 9

### "LIVING TOO MUCH OFF THE PAST"

Promoters and residents who believed that Council Bluffs had succeeded as a town by 1869 had sufficient accomplishments to celebrate. Their dream of being a major staging area serving the needs of the westward-bound emigrants was realized. In their exhaustive campaign to become the railroad center of the Northwest they were successful when the residents, motivated by financial gain and civic pride, finally induced five railroads to build to their city, linking them with points east, north and south. But they lost in terms of the prize to Omaha which supplanted Council Bluffs as the railroad and leading outfitting center after 1869.

Omaha continued to dominate trade in the Missouri valley after 1870. A city directory, published in 1870, boasted of its forty-four hotels, four bowling alleys, three architects, 94 saloons, and 5,380 business and professional people. The directory predicted that Omaha would extend her limits, increase her trade and multiply her population until "hundreds of thousands shall throng her marts and streets, and East and West shall pour their offerings at the feet of this Queen City of the West!"<sup>1</sup> In the same directory, Council Bluffs was depicted as a sleeping city at the foot of picturesque hills.

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<sup>1</sup>J. M. Wolfe, Omaha Directory, 1870 (Omaha: Omaha Daily Herald, 1870).



Omaha's superior attitude cannot be mistaken from an emigrant guidebook published jointly with Council Bluffs in 1879. Promoters used bold, idealistic phrases extolling their city, similar to ones that Council Bluffs' promoters had used twenty years earlier. Other propaganda claimed that Omaha had replaced Council Bluffs as the leading outfitting and supply center for the West.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1870 and 1890 Omaha experienced a remarkable growth in population.

Figure 2. Comparison Between Population of Omaha and Council Bluffs

Year	Omaha	Council Bluffs
1870	16,083	10,020
1875	24,000*	9,215
1880	30,518	18,063
1885	61,835	21,557
1888	125,000	21,500*
1890	140,452	21,474
1895	145,000*	20,189

\*estimated

The population of 16,083 in 1870 nearly doubled within the next decade to 30,518 in 1880. By the time of the state census of 1885, the population again had doubled to 61,835. Five years later Omaha boasted a population of 125,000.<sup>2</sup> This dramatic increase has been attributed

<sup>1</sup> Frank B. Ober and G. W. Day, The Commerce of Two Cities. The Present and Future of Omaha & Council Bluffs, [n. p.]

<sup>2</sup> Population statistics are cited in Alfred Sorenson, History of Omaha (Omaha: Gibson, Miller & Richardson Printers, 1889), p. 306.

partly to Omaha's influx of foreign emigrants, progressive city council, and public works department. Notable improvements were made: a system of storm and sanitary sewers were installed, paving was begun in 1874, street railroads were in operation, and public and parochial education was available.

The town's prosperity supported five daily and fourteen weekly newspapers. Omaha even rivalled Milwaukee and St. Louis in the production of beer. It also stole the stockyard business from Council Bluffs by constructing the Union Stockyard and became an important Missouri Valley banking center. The multi-million dollar business of the Union Pacific Company stimulated other commercial activity in the city.<sup>1</sup>

During the same period Council Bluffs also expanded, but it was overshadowed by Omaha's immense growth. While Omaha was a center of banking, meat packing, railroads, distribution, and manufacturing, Council Bluffs proudly pointed to its annual ten million dollar wholesale business in agricultural implements and accessories. During the decades of the 1870's and 1880's Council Bluffs served as a regional distribution center for buggies, surreys, phaetons, road wagons and farm implements. Its twelve large warehouses supplied the neighboring states; and the Union Transfer Company handled the wares of thirty different manufacturers.

Several additional railroads had constructed to Council Bluffs since 1870; the Union Pacific bridge was completed and large numbers of immigrants from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway swelled the population. Like Omaha, Council Bluffs had experienced significant

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

population growth between 1870 and 1880. The population increased from 10,000 to 18,000<sup>1</sup>--a large rise but not enough to keep up with Omaha.

Like Omaha, Council Bluffs made its share of civic improvements at this time. In 1883 a professional fire department replaced the volunteer "bucket brigade." Telephone service and electric power were introduced, the main streets were paved, and "trolley" cars provided transportation around town. By 1885 Council Bluffs appeared prosperous with its seventeen hotels, three packing plants, twelve churches, thirty saloons, twenty-six physicians, and twenty-eight law firms.

However, between 1885 and 1895 the population dropped from 21,557 to 20,189. This trend continued until 1905, when the population stabilized. Numerous explanations have been offered to explain the decrease in population and corresponding business losses. A crop failure was blamed for a financial depression in the Missouri Valley, which seriously affected the city's role in agriculture. In addition, Iowa adopted prohibition which closed one of Council Bluff's most lucrative business--bars. Ill-timed rail schedules discouraged travel and business, and dissatisfied stockholders threatened receivership action.

The lack of civic pride was considered a contributing factor. Fearing higher taxation, residents resisted change and improvements. For instance, a proposal in 1889 to link Council Bluffs to Omaha by trolley car and bridge was denounced on the grounds that it would only benefit Omaha while Council Bluffs paid the bill. One resident

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<sup>1</sup> Population figures for Council Bluffs compiled from records in the Department of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa.

concluded that Council Bluffs had changed from a "vigorous, daring pioneer society to one of increasing conservatism."<sup>1</sup> The town's leaders, although men of strong personality and successful as businessmen, failed to provide effective leadership. Thus they became stumbling blocks to growth.

Prior to 1869 the citizens' raison d'etre had centered around the goal of becoming the "Spearhead of the Frontier" and "Star of the Northwest." The enthusiasm and hard work of the 1850's and 1860's dissipated after 1869 when their goal was realized. Instead of aggressively working towards new goals and new achievements, the citizens, tired of competing with Omaha, resigned themselves to the fate of remaining in the shadow of Omaha.

Council Bluffs' residents celebrated what they had been--an outfitting center for thousands, an important railroad center, and a home for thousands. But the tragedy lay in what they became. Citizens became preoccupied with the past at the expense of the present and future. They no longer cared for an identity separate from Omaha. One soul-searching resident, aware that Council Bluffs had lost its enthusiasm, vigor, ambition, and perserverance of fifty years earlier, summed up the city's position in this way:

At the turn of the century we had more veneer and less ruggedness; more artificiality and less elegance of a basic sort; more bookishness and less learning. We were living too much off the past and too engrossed in the hour to think in terms of the future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Perkins, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (Council Bluffs, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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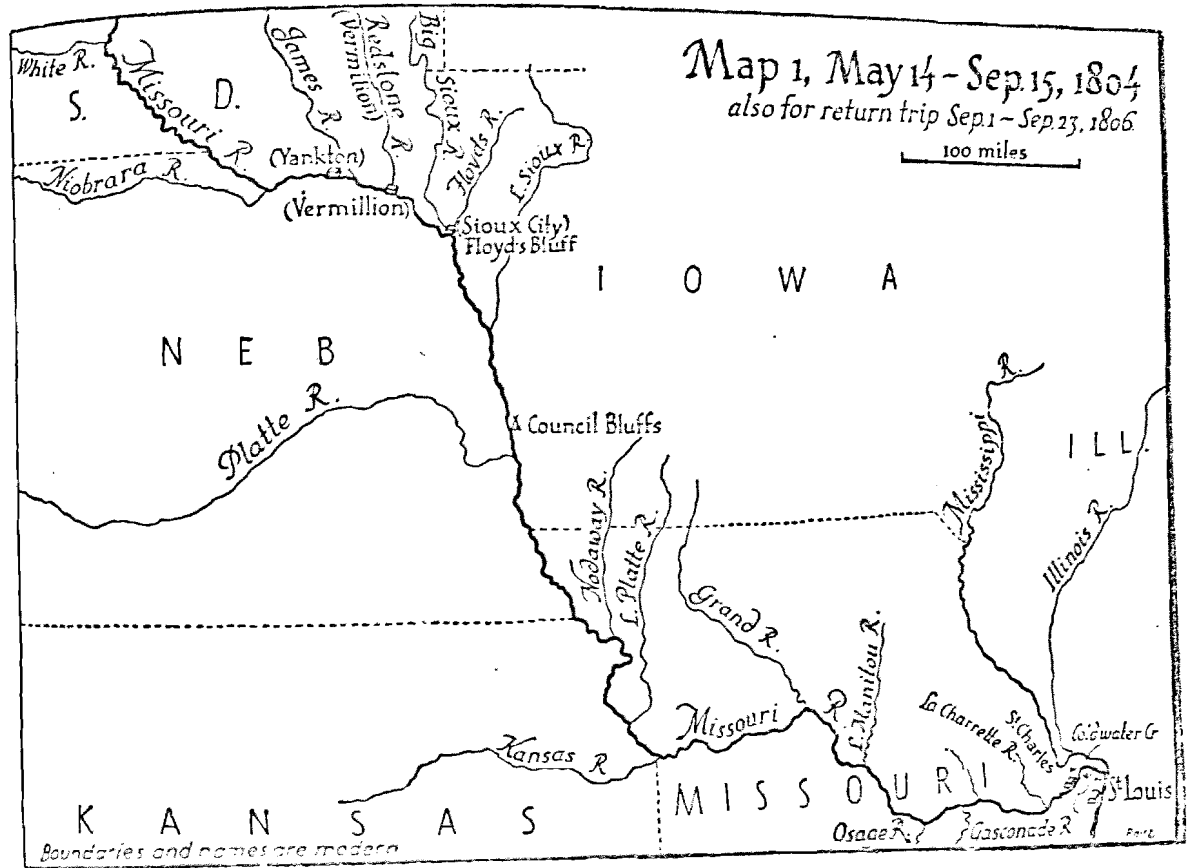
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## APPENDIX

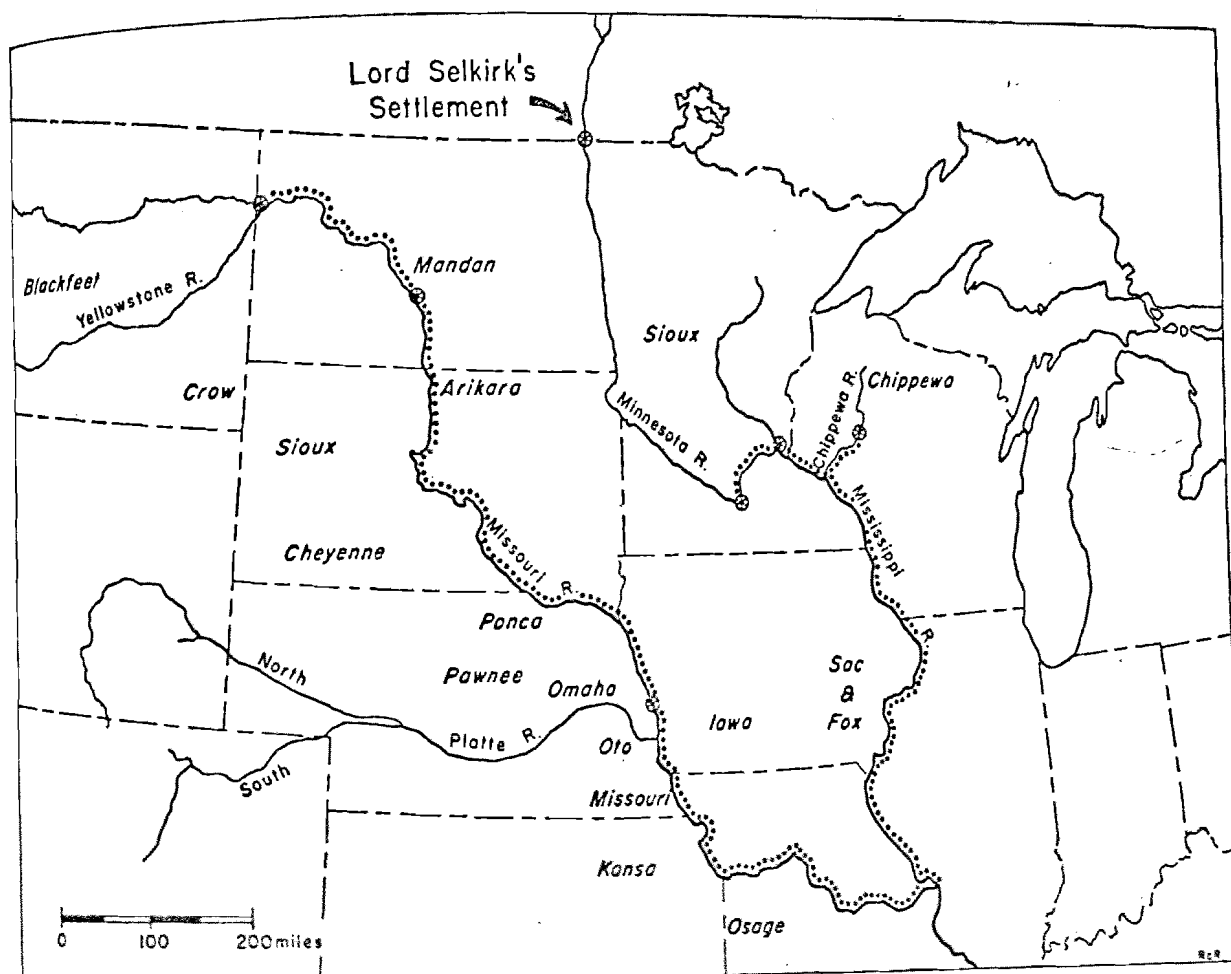


Map 4. Location of Council Bluffs in Relationship to the Lewis and Clark Expedition<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bernard DeVoto (ed.), The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 2.



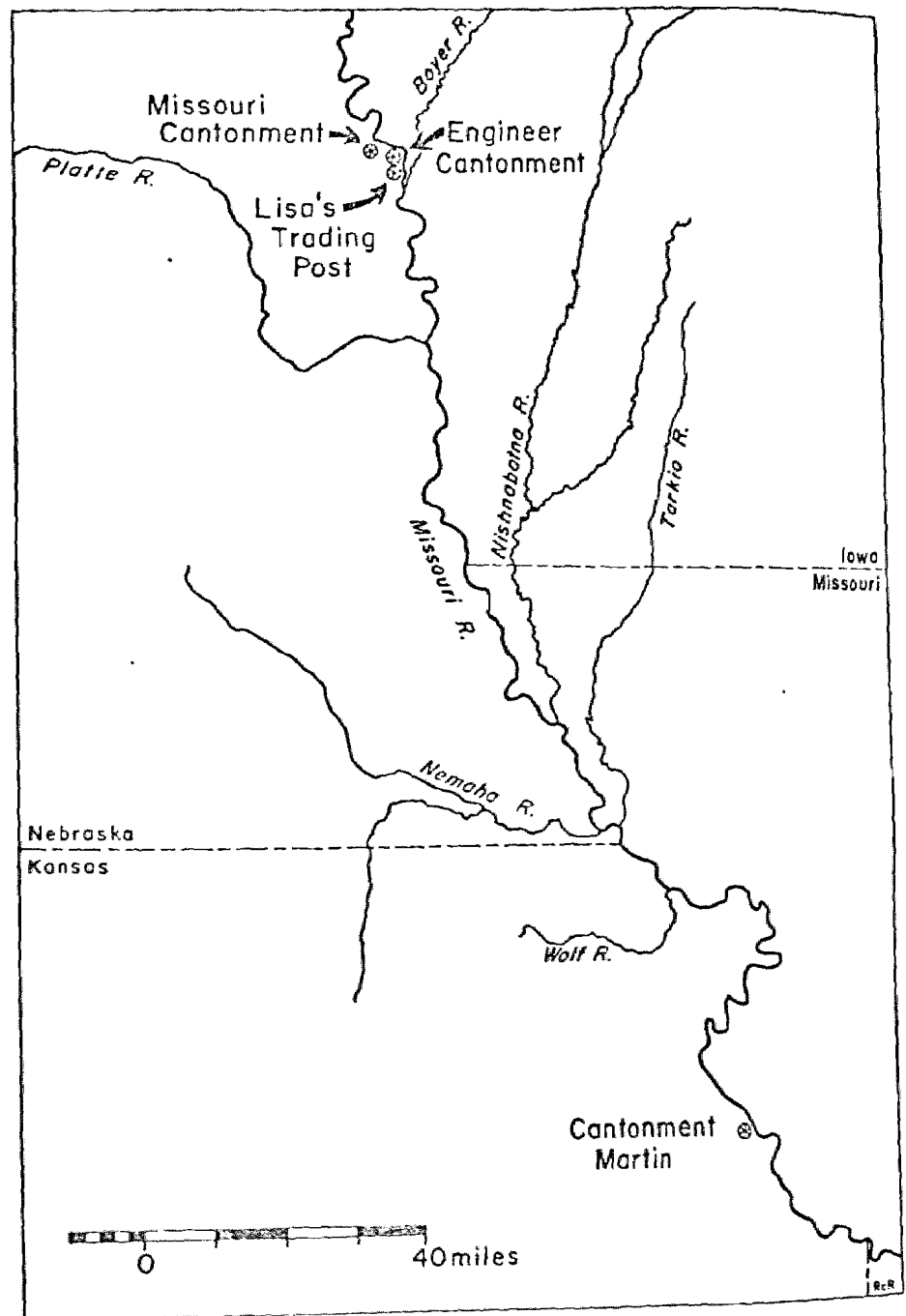
## APPENDIX B



Map 5. Routes of the Proposed Yellowstone Expedition<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Nichols (ed.), The Missouri Expedition, 1818-1820 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. xii.

## APPENDIX C



Map 6. Map Showing Winter Quarters of the Yellowstone Expedition,

<sup>1</sup>Roger L. Nichols (ed.), *The Missouri Expedition, 1818-1820* (Norman University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 66.

## APPENDIX D

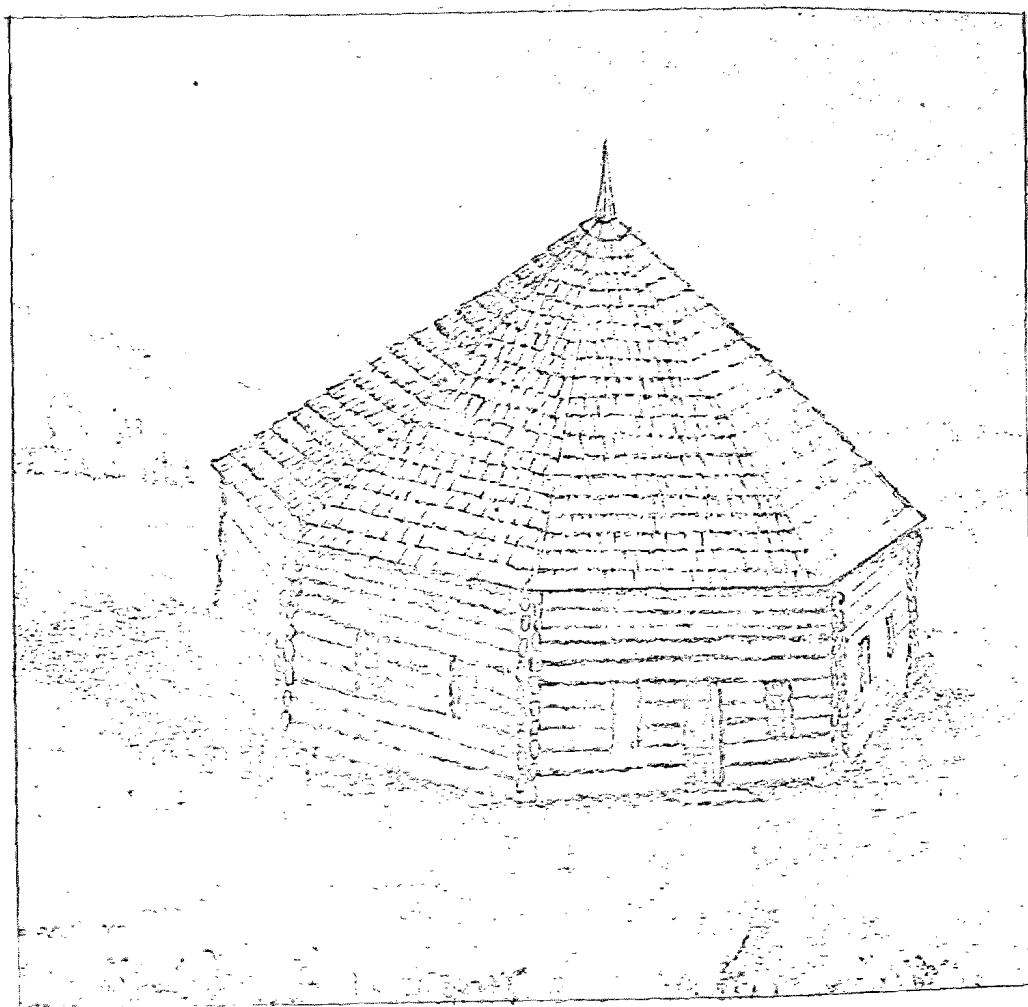


Figure 3. The Mormon Tabernacle Constructed at Kanesville in 1848

Sketch by George Simons

## APPENDIX E

Figure 4. List of Mormon Pioneer Companies Which Departed From Kanesville or Vicinity

DEPARTURE		NUMBER OF		CAPTAIN	TOTAL PEOPLE
No. of Companies	Place	Date	People	Wagons	
6	Winter	1847			
	Quarters	Apr 14	148	72	Brigham Young
	"	Jun 17	362	151	Daniel Spencer
	"	Jun 17	352	139	Edward Hunter
	"	Jun 17	331	80*	Jadediah M. Grant
	"	Jun 17	318	75*	Abraham O. Smoot
	"	Jun 17	126	50*	Charles C. Rich
			1637	567	2,000
3	Kanes-	1848			
	ville	May 26	1220	300*	Brigham Young
	"	May 29	662	180*	Heber C. Kimball
	"	Jun 30	526	125*	Willard Richards
			2408	605	4,000
5	Kanes-	1849			
	ville	Jun 6	500	100	Orson Spencer
	"	Jul 12	500	100	Allen Taylor
	"	Jul 10	500	100*	Siles Richards
	"	Jul 4	447	120	George A. Smith
	"	Apr 19	57	22	Ezra T. Benson
			2004	442	Howard Egan
					3,000
10	Kanes-	1850			
	ville	Jun 3	206	51	Milo Andrus
	"	Jun 7	715	150	Benjamin Hawkins
	"	Jun 12	500	100*	Aaron Johnson
	"	Jun	500	100	James Pace
	"	Jul 4	261	67	Edward Hunter
	"				P. E. Fund
	"	Jun 15	210	42	Joseph Young
	"	Jun 15	525	105	Warren Foote
	"	Jun 20	220	44	Wilford Woodruff
	"	Jun 20	200	50	Stephen Markham
	"	Jun 15	270	54	David Evans
			3692	763	5,000
4	Kanes-	1851			
	ville	May 1	750	150	John G. Smith
	"	Jun 21	500	100	James W. Cummings
	"	Jun 29	500	100	Easton Kelsey
	"	Jul 7	250	50	John Brown
	"				P. E. Fund
			500	100*	George W. Oman
			500	100*	Morris Phelps
			3000	600	5,000

\* Estimated

DEPARTURE		NUMBER OF		CAPTAIN	TOTAL PEOPLE
No. of Companies	Place	Date	People	Wagons	
	Kanes-	1852			
	ville	May 30	190	46*	James W. Bay
	"	May 29	300	60*	James J. Jepson
	"	Jun 7	200	40*	Thomas D. Howell
	"	Jun 10	225	50	Joseph Outhouse
	"	Jun	340	32	John Tidwell
	"	Jun	260	50*	David Wood
	"	Jun	340	70*	Henry B. M. Jolley
	"	Jun	245	50*	Isaac W. Stewart
	"	May 15	241	45	Benjamin Gardner
	"	Jun	239	54	James McGaw
	"	Jun	262	63	Harmon Cutler
	"	Jul 5	250	50*	John B. Walker
	"	Jul	230	50*	Robert Weimer
	"	Jun	364	70*	Uriah Curtis
	"	Jun	175	35*	Isaac Bullock
	"	Jun	250	50*	James C. Snow
	"	Jul	100	20*	Elf B. Kelsey
	"	Jun	220	45*	Henry W. Miller
	"	Jul	110	25*	Allen Weeks
	"	Jun	250	31	Abraham O. Smoot
	"				P. E. Fund
	"	Jun 4	88	10	Thomas Marsden
21			4874	940	10,000
	Six Mile	1853			
	Grove	Jun 1	122	28	David Wilkin
	"	Jun 9	282	70	John A. Miller
					John W. Cooley
	Kanes-	Jun	295	56	Moses Clawson
	ville	Jul 13	100*	20*	Vincent Shurtliff
	"	Jul 11	321	42	Joseph W. Young
	"	Jun 3	250	40	Claudius V. Spencer
	"				P. E. Fund
	"	Jul 14	200	22	Appleton W. Harmon
7	also			278	1,570
	Keokuk				2603 all
	Kansas	1854			
	City				
	Norman	1855			
	Grove, Kans				

\* Estimated

In view of the fact that emigrants have been grossly deceived by statements from interested or ignorant persons as to the country, its resources, and possibilities, we would say that the country around Council Bluffs is very well settled, that the crops of corn, wheat, potatoes, and in fact, all farming crops are abundant, the soil very fertile and the climate most healthy. At Kaneshville there are now some six stores with large and unlimited stocks of goods and other stores around, two Public Houses, a Bakery, and Confectionery Establishment, Drug Store, four Wagon Shops, an establishment for making Riding and Pack Saddles, Lariats, Packing Bags, Gun Smiths, Watch Smiths, Harness Makers, etc. There are two ferries across the Missouri River near this place. The range on the prairies for cattle is unlimited. The Missouri River is navigated to this point with as much facility as at any point below, and roads leading here from the different places on the Mississippi River are generally good, there being three main routes; one from Fort Des Moines reported very good by the emigrants last spring. Those from Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, Montrose, Nauvoo, Quincy, etc., the committee advise to take the Mormon Trace, being the best and most direct. The streams are bridged excepting the Nishnabotna, where there is a ferry. The road generally keeps to a dividing ridge. There were many emigrants here this summer that went to St. Joseph from Burlington; they report the road through the State of Missouri very much broken, with many hills and sloughs. If you should wish to go to St. Joseph, this is the best place to come. From this place to St. Joseph is a good road and thickly settled, and teams constantly passing to and from. And we would say the longest distance on the Mormon Trace without inhabitants is now forty miles;

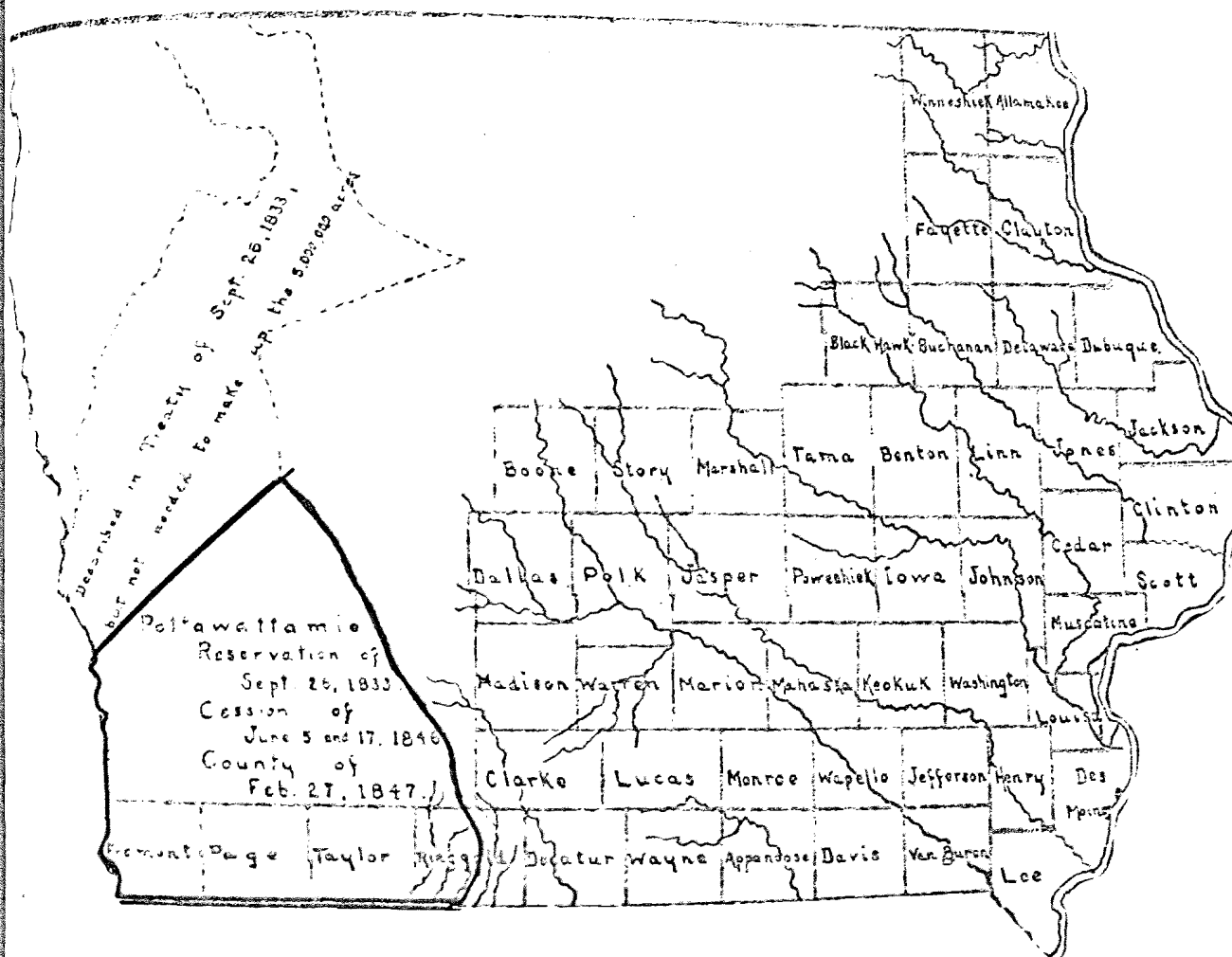
and that before next spring, we think there will be many more settlers on the road, as the Surveyors and Commissioners are now laying out the road from Pisgah, also from Fort Des Moines. A weekly mail has been established from the Fort to this place. The distance from Council Bluffs to Fort Laramie is 445 miles. Distance from Independence, Missouri, to Fort Laramie, according to Mr. Bryant, is 672 miles; over two hundred miles farther than from this point. Thus, you see that emigrants who cross the Missouri at this point shorten the distance over 200 miles.

We have eight or ten grist and flouring mills in the county and any number of horses, cows, oxen, mules, etc. in the market for sale. Yet, it is always better for persons to bring their own teams. We advise all to have very light strong wagons, for either oxen or horses as all with heavy wagons this year have, if possible changed them at Salt Lake, or taken to packs, but if you pack from here, your wagons will generally sell well at this place. Here we have many persons offering as guides to Salt Lake, California, Oregon, or the Sioux Country, North. Finally, if our fellow citizens are disposed to take this route, they will find every facility to advance them on their journey.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

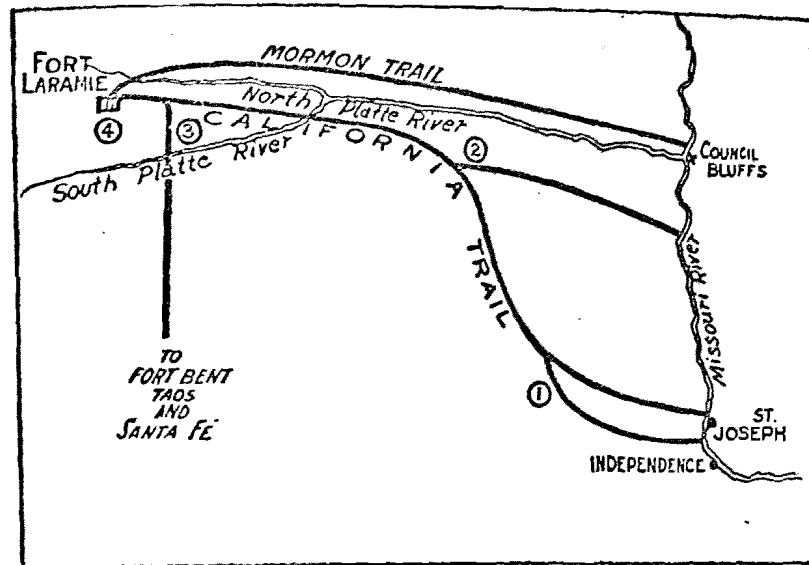
J. B. Stusman )	
T. D. Brown )	Committee
C. Voorhis )	Council Bluffs
H. Bishop )	Pottawattamie County
J. Needham )	September 15, 1849

## APPENDIX G



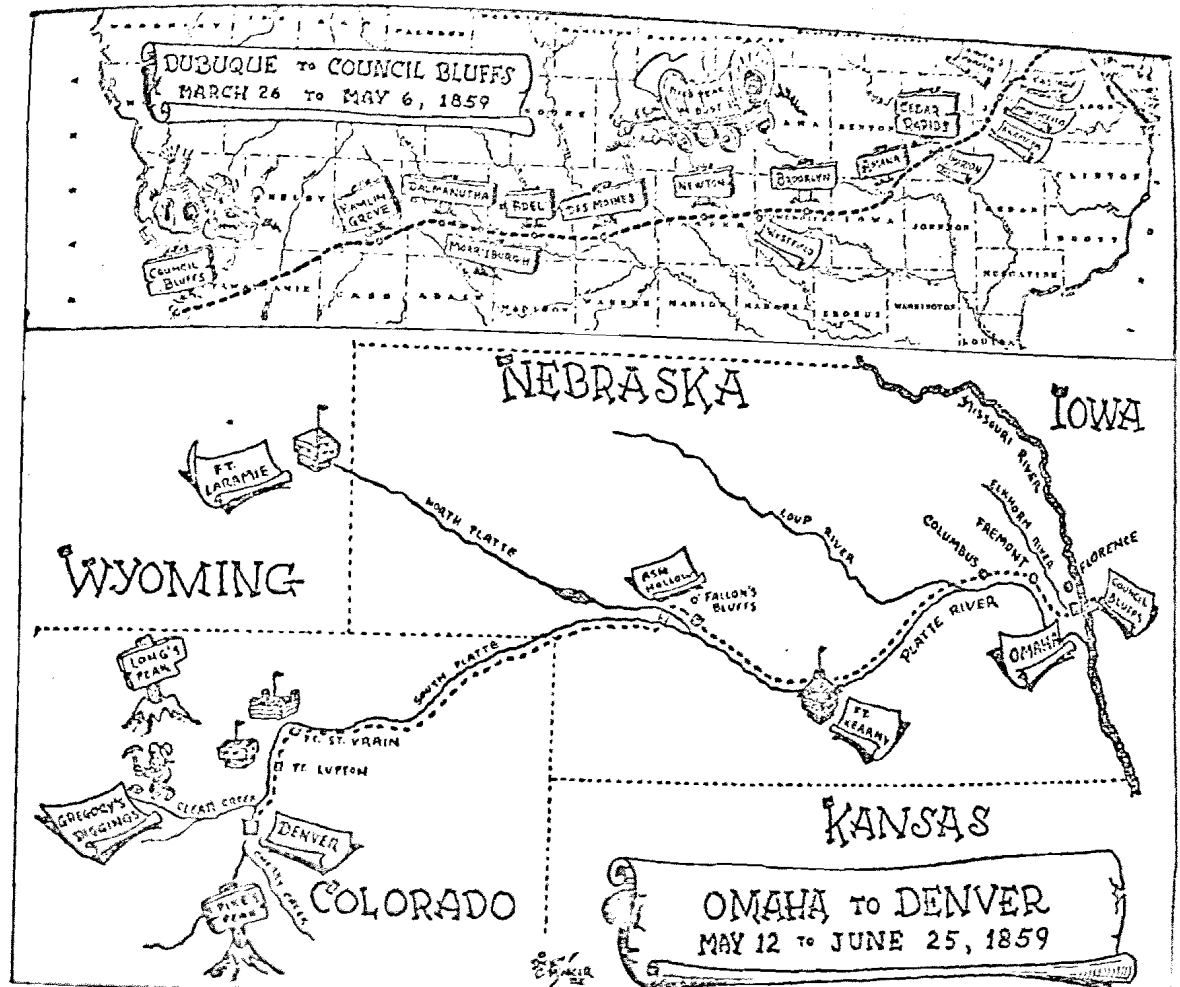
Map 7. Map Illustrating the Pottawattamie Cession as Stipulated  
by the Act of 1847





Map 8. This map illustrates the claim made by Council Bluffs residents that emigrants could save 200 miles of overland travel by outfitting at their town. It was assumed that emigrants would travel by steamboat to Council Bluffs.

The numbers on the map refer to the four subsidiary trails entering the California Trail.



Map 9. Map Illustrating The Route From Dubuque, Iowa to Denver via Council Bluffs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth F. Millsap (ed.), "Pike Peak Journal," *IJHP*, XLVII (January, 1850).